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Shaping Christian Identity: The False Scripture Argument in Early Christian Literature

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THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

SHAPING CHRISTIAN IDENTITY: THE FALSE SCRIPTURE ARGUMENT
IN EARLY CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

By

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For Jenness

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	viii
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
1. Interpretation of Scripture and Jewish Christian Relations	1
1.1. The Interpretation of Scripture.....	1
1.2. Conflict and Competition.....	3
1.3. Struggling for Identity.....	8
2. Shaping Christian Identity: The False Scripture Argument.....	13
2.1. Defining Identity.....	13
2.2. The False Scripture Writings	17
2.3. A History of Scholarship on the False Scripture Strategy	21
3. Project Outline	27
Chapter 2. <i>Ptolemy's Letter to Flora</i> and the Tripartite Division of the Law.....	34
1. Introduction.....	34
2. Ptolemy: Biography and Influences	35
2.1. Ptolemy and Flora	35
2.2. Ptolemy and Valentinus	38
2.3. Ptolemy and Marcion.....	43
3. The Nature of the Law and the Three Lawgivers	47
3.1. Those Who Misunderstand the Law	49
3.2. The tripartite Division of the Law	58
3.3. Ptolemy and the Mosaic Law.....	71
4. Ptolemy, False Scripture, and Christian Identity	75
4.1. Competing Interpretations of the Mosaic Law	75
4.2. Conclusion	79
Chapter 3. The Second Legislation of the Didascalia Apostolorum	81
1. Introduction.....	81
1.1. Background	82
1.2. The Meaning of <i>deuterosis</i>	85
2. Analysis of the Second Legislation.....	87
2.1. The Original Law	88
2.2. The Second Legislation.....	91
2.3. The Role of Christ.....	101
3. The Didascalia, the Second Legislation, and Christian identity.....	103
3.1. Internal Conflict in the Community	103
3.2. A Christian Audience.....	105
3.3. Markers of Identity.....	108
3.4. “the people”	109
3.5. The Gentiles	114
3.6. Conclusion	117

Chapter 4. The False Passages of the Pseudo-Clementine <i>Homilies</i>	119
1. A Brief History of the Pseudo-Clementines	119
1.1. Source Criticism and the Pseudo-Clementines	119
1.2. Source Criticism and the False Passages	122
2. The <i>Homilies</i> and the False Passages.....	128
2.1. The Nature of the False Passages.....	129
2.2. The Purpose of the False Passages.....	132
2.3. Discerning the False Passages	135
2.4. Categories of False Passages	140
3. The <i>Homilies</i> , False Passages, and Religious Identity.....	156
3.1. The <i>Homilies</i> and Social Identity.....	156
3.2. The <i>Homilies</i> and the Rehabilitation of the Gentiles	159
3.3. The <i>Homilies</i> and Continuity with Judaism.....	161
3.4. The <i>Homilies</i> and the Marcionites	166
3.5. Conclusion	170
Chapter 5. Conclusion.....	174
1. Common Elements of the False Scripture Argument	174
2. Explaining the Commonalities.....	182
3. Implications for Future Study	188
Bibliography	192
Biographical Sketch.....	202

ABSTRACT

Christian communities in the first four centuries struggled to construct and maintain a sense of social identity in a time when there were no stable descriptions for Christianity or Judaism. Competing social identities emerged among Jewish and Christian groups as various authors worked to construct and maintain communal boundaries regarding acceptable (and, simultaneously, unacceptable) beliefs and practices. While some Christian groups rejected certain traditions, other groups found reasons to adopt them. These choices contributed to a community's borders; they constitute what makes "us" different from "them." The recent work of Daniel Boyarin and Judith Lieu illustrates how literary analysis reveals the way texts contribute to the construction of social identity. An author (re)presents the community's values and beliefs, whether real or idealized, not only to establish an identity but also to maintain that identity. An investigation of early Christian texts regarding their attitudes toward the Mosaic law, then, provides a window into the process of identity formation.

This dissertation is an examination of a peculiar scriptural hermeneutic that claims that certain biblical mandates found in the scriptures are false. Any beliefs or regulations contained in the supposed false portions of scripture can be rejected on the grounds that they are not part of God's eternal laws. The distinction between the authentic and the false passages has been revealed by Jesus Christ and passed down to his most faithful followers. The false scripture argument is found, to my knowledge, exclusively within *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*, the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, and the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*. *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora* teaches that the law has been instituted by three sources – none of which is the High God. Instead, Moses, the Jewish elders, and the demiurge are responsible for the law contained in the scriptures. Christ, an emissary of the High God, is sent to validate those laws that reflect the nature of the High God. On the other hand, the *Didascalia Apostolorum* claims that all of the scriptures were instituted by God. However, only the Decalogue constitutes the eternal laws of God delivered to Moses. The other laws were established by God through Moses as a punishment upon the Jews as a result of the golden calf incident. These secondary laws have been abrogated since the arrival of Christ. In the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*, the false passages of scripture have been instituted by Satan and his forces in order to discern the faithful from the wicked, the latter of which follow the regulations found in the false passages. Like the

Didascalia, the Homilies claims that Christ, the true prophet, has arrived to discern the true passages from the false ones.

Although there are overlapping tenets, each text presents a unique explanation of the origin and catalogue of the false sections of scripture. The variation in the false scripture argument reflects each author's distinctive effort to construct communal boundaries in the face of social competition. The competition can stem from the attraction to the ways of Judaism or a defense against the beliefs of other Christian groups, such as the Marcionites. The false scripture argument functions as a rhetorical tool designed to demarcate the author and his community as the true followers of God since they alone possess knowledge of, as well as the means to distinguish, the false passages of scripture. The false scripture argument shapes the community's religious life by barring members from dangerous practices while at the same time validating the traditions accepted by the author and his community.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1. Interpretation of Scripture and Jewish Christian Relations

The present dissertation is an investigation into a specific rhetorical tactic I have termed the false scripture argument. Found only in three Christian texts, *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*, the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, and the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*, this literary argument presents a claim that not all portions of scripture were established as the true and eternal laws of God. Each text presents its own version of how the false passages of scripture can be identified and ignored. Yet, the false scripture argument is one interpretive approach among many others that existed in the first four centuries of the Common Era. In order to supply a proper context for the false scripture argument, the issues of interpretation and Jewish Christian relations first need to be discussed. Afterwards, an explanation on how texts, especially the false scripture writings, contribute to the construction of social identity. In order to further appreciate the false scripture argument, a history of scholarship on this rhetorical tactic is provided to illustrate that this limited hermeneutical approach has been underrepresented within scholarship on scriptural interpretation and early Jewish Christian relations.

1.1. The Interpretation of Scripture

The scriptures are an important element within Jewish and Christian communities. These sacred writings illustrate how God interacts with an elect group of people, especially in the laws and traditions that were delivered to Moses. Yet, there was debate over the proper means of understanding the divine regulations and practicing important rituals. The exact manner of how to properly implement God's law resulted in differences of opinions on the particular meaning of the scriptures. A community's decision on the matter of scriptural interpretation often distinguished it from others who also used the scriptures.

The description of the meaning of the scriptures as well as their role in a community has long been argued by those who utilize this literature. One approach to scripture is to understand it as a historical account of what happened in the past. Many Jews and Christians read the scriptures as the history of who they are as a group. Another stance, one that is not necessarily

contradictory to the first, is to perceive scripture as a receptacle for religious truths.¹ In this view, the scriptures are more than history lessons but relate to the events of the present. To understand contemporary events, Jews and Christians revisited the accounts in the scriptures in hopes of finding some guidance in the here and now.² Still, there was debate over the proper means to interpret the scriptures as well as who actually held the authority to perform such a task.

In the ancient world, a variety of interpretive approaches to the scriptures existed in the first four centuries of the Common Era. Jews and Christians wrestled with the proper means by which to understand the scriptures. For a time, scholarship on Christian interpretation grouped most varieties of interpretation into either the Antiochene or Alexandrian trajectories. The former represents a literal approach that was generally found in the city of Antioch and the surrounding Syrian region. The latter view, located in the region of Egypt, represents a way of unearthing a deeper, more spiritual meaning beneath the surface of the text and has been. Yet, this dualistic model may prove less than useful.³ It appears that (1) the two trajectories are modern constructs and (2) this paradigm does not capture the variety of interpretive approaches which existed in the first four centuries of the Common Era.

A variety of approaches to scriptural interpretation was available in the Common Era. For example, the rabbinic tradition contains its own trajectories of exegesis espoused by the various individual rabbis and their respective exegetical tendencies. To claim that the Antiochene-Alexandrian dichotomy is all-encompassing radically stretches the actual situation of the early centuries. When the various ancient authors and writings are examined, a more expansive list of interpretive approaches emerge.

The claim of ownership of the scriptures was intimately related to offering an interpretive model regarding the correct way to understand the sacred texts. As the numerous exegetical models developed, participants attempted to justify their preferences. One way to do this was

¹ Neusner, Jacob, *Judaism and the Interpretation of Scripture* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 1-2.

² James L. Kugel and Rowan A. Greer, *Early Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 38.

³ See, for example, Frances Young's "Alexandrian and Antiochene Exegesis" in *A History of Biblical Interpretation. Volume 1: The Ancient Period* (ed. Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 322-354 which supplies an example of the overlap between Origen's work and the Antiochenes.

claiming to possess the true interpretation as transmitted from authoritative figures from the past. If an author found a way to connect “our” (i.e. the intended audience of the author) lineage with the cultural heroes of the community, any opposition from other groups must be incorrect. “Historically, differences between Judaism and Christianity can in large measure be traced back to and understood in light of differing exegetical presuppositions and practices.”⁴ Jewish and Christian authors labored to construct not only a systematic understanding of scripture and the religious practices derived from it, but also a polemic to counter the claims of their competitors.

1.2. Conflict and Competition

So much has already been written on the relationship between Judaism and Christianity, especially how the early Christian apologists began to circumscribe something known as Christianity. A considerable amount of literature can be found on Justin Martyr’s *Dialogue with Trypho*, the *Epistle of Barnabas*, Ignatius, Irenaeus, John Chrysostom, Aphrahat, and Ephrem. This corpus reflected, and even fostered, certain ancient theological positions such as *contra Iudaeos* or *verus Israel*. These strategies detail how Christians attempted to dismantle the legitimacy of Judaism and the Jewish people. These issues are certainly relevant to the current discussion since the notion of false scripture appears to have originated in relation to, or by participation in, these theological stances.

Although Christians and Jews shared the writings of the Tanakh, these scriptures served more as an area of overlap since Jews also had the Mishnah and the Christians their own canons of Christian writings. Jews and Christians competed with each other over the proper interpretation of the scriptures. Each community believed the scriptures could only be fully understood by their later writings.⁵ “This interpretive procedure, using one text to clarify another on the same subject, was adopted, we know, by interpreters from a very early period.”⁶ The writings of early Christian and rabbinic authors witness the conflict over the exact interpretive approach to apply to the sacred writings. In particular, Christians designed a variety of exegetical

⁴ Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 1.

⁵ William Horbury, *Jews and Christians in Contact and Controversy* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 212-215.

⁶ Kugel and Greer, *Early Biblical Interpretation*, 32.

tactics aimed at disenfranchising Judaism from the literature that chronicles its history as God's chosen people.⁷ As Jews and Christians struggled to strike a balance between and among each other, they also contested any other group's ability to interpret the scriptures properly. For example, texts such as the *Epistle of Barnabas* and the *Didascalia Apostolorum* present the Jews as unable to adequately understand, and therefore interpret, the scriptures.⁸ Both of these texts utilize the golden calf incident to challenge the legitimacy of contemporary Jews and thereby validate their respective communities' interpretation of scripture. In the process, social borders are constructed and religious identity created. The act of interpreting such biblical events engenders group borders.

The boundaries set in place in the process of constructing identity are not only designed as protective defenses of the community; they are also the rules for the inevitable social interactions with others outside the community.⁹ These 'rules of engagement' are the motivation for our authors in composing texts designed to reinforce identity and prevent the dissolution of the groups' identity. "Neither the ancient Jews nor the Christians went back to the Bible to find anything as abstract as the idea of tradition. Rather they did so to locate precise texts that justified, authenticated, and legitimized different types of group experience. Tradition became the interpretation of traditions."¹⁰

Social tension often accompanies the process of constructing group identity. The tension between Christian community and the Jewish synagogues resulted in negative depictions of the traditions of the Jews within Christian writings. A religious tradition is defined, in part, by its ritual practices. As Jews and Christians began to perceive themselves as something different, they struggled to demarcate themselves by their presentation of their version of communal rituals

⁷ Marc Hirshman, *A Rivalry of Genius: Jewish and Christian Biblical Interpretation in Late Antiquity* (trans. Batya Stein; New York: State University of New York, 1996), 21-23.

⁸ Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel: A Study of the Relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire AD 135-425* (trans. H. McKeating; London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1996), 80-89.

⁹ Judith Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (New York: Oxford UP, 2004), 100.

¹⁰ Brian Stock, *Listening For the Text: On the Uses of the Past* (Baltimore, MD; John Hopkins UP, 1990), 158.

and beliefs. Cultic elements of Judaism such as the Sabbath, circumcision, and sacrifice that existed among Christian communities were attacked by some Christian authors in an attempt to remove them from the religious life of the community.¹¹ Christian authors searched the scriptures as well as other Christian writings for a means to explain why their congregants should avoid such practices. Knowing how to practice God's laws was an important aspect of communal identity. They often referred to the figure of Christ as a rhetorical device to establish a dichotomy of acceptable and unacceptable practices. By doing so, Christians validated their own beliefs and practices as derived from the life and ministry of Christ, the expected messiah of God. As communities made decisions over which rituals were acceptable, they also contributed to the construction of group identity.

In the ancient world, the old always trumped the new. The Jews and their religious tradition, often encapsulated in the scriptures, had a long and respected past. The growing Christian movement temporarily lost its connection to the esteemed reputation of the Jews when it began to represent itself as something other than Jewish. However, when the Christians appropriated the Jewish scriptures for themselves, and more importantly provided a new interpretation of them based on the Jesus event, a revolution occurred. What was new was now the more authoritative and respected, while arguments against Jews and Judaism emphasized the inadequacy of the past outdated model of Judaism.¹² Christian interpretation involved a two-tiered system of hermeneutics where the New Testament became necessary for the proper interpretation of the Jewish scriptures. According to the early Christians, the Jews were unable to interpret their own scriptures.¹³ Christianity became the custodian of the true version of the old, established traditions of God.

¹¹ 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. M.J. Mudler and H. Sysling; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 727-787 (746).

¹² Guy G. Stroumsa, "The Christian Hermeneutical Revolution and its Double Helix" in *The Use of Sacred Books in the Ancient World* (ed. L.V. Rutgers, et al., eds.; Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 9-28 (13).

¹³ Stroumsa, "Hermeneutical Revolution," 19-20.

In the aftermath of the Jewish War with Rome in 66-73 CE, Jews organized a canon of writings, that is, the Tanak and later the Mishnah, which became the foundation of forms of Jewish identity. Perhaps in response, Christians also laid claim to the same writings in order to appropriate the prestigious title of God's chosen. In addition, Christians may have also intended to gain converts from Jews who used these texts.¹⁴ Each group claimed to be the true Israel, and thereby inherit God's promises. Furthermore, Christianity had little prestige in the Roman Empire. By appropriating the title from the Jews, the Christians may have wanted the clout and amnesty.¹⁵

Christians did not struggle over the scriptures only with Jews. Other Christians offered competing interpretations as well. Marcion's challenge to the scriptures offers a radical example of Christian interpretation.¹⁶ "[T]he attraction of Marcionism demanded a far more precise argument and a much clearer defence of the Christian veneration yet non-observance of the Jewish Law. This defence went hand in hand with anti-Jewish polemic, for only by discrediting Jewish claims to understand and follow the Law could the radically contrary Christian stance be justified."¹⁷ "Heretics" such as Marcion employed literary criticism in their critiques of the scriptures.¹⁸

Basing themselves on the Old Testament, gentile Christians were facing two complex fronts: Marcionites and Gnostics who rejected it, Rabbinic Jews and

¹⁴ Joachim Schaper, "The Rabbinic Canon and the Old Testament of the Early Church: A Social-Historical View" in *Canonization and Decanonization: Papers Presented to the International Conference of the Leiden Institute for the Study of Religions (LISOR), Held at Leiden 9-10 January 1997* (ed. A. van der Kooij and K van der Toorn; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 93-106 (100-101).

¹⁵ Hirshman, *A Rivalry of Genius*, 19. In general, Jews were recognized by governing bodies and excused from many religious practices (e.g. emperor worship). As Christians were perceived as something other than Jews, however, they were expected to participate in the social activities of the empire. See Simon's *Verus Israel* (pp. 98-133) for more specific discussions of these points.

¹⁶ As the following chapters will highlight, the role of Marcion in the genesis of the false scripture argument is significant.

¹⁷ Lieu, *Image and Reality: The Jews in the World of the Christians in the Second Century* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 105.

¹⁸ Robert Grant, *Heresy and Criticism: The Search for Authenticity in Early Christian Literature* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 11, 31.

Judeo-Christians who interpreted it as a binding Law. Hence, the two-front struggle during which the New Testament originated could be reduced to a single parameter: *the Jewish scriptures and their interpretation*.¹⁹

It has been suggested that the majority of Christians active in third-century Syria were Marcionites.²⁰ However, a large Jewish population also existed in the third- and fourth-century Syria, as witnessed by the many synagogues.²¹ Marcion's extreme approach forced other Christians to reassess the Jewish heritage of the scriptures. Christians chose to adopt the scriptures as their own in spite of Marcion's radical position toward the same writings.²²

The writings of Marcion threatened any emerging stability Christians may have found in claiming authority over the respected Jewish scriptures. Even so, the critical method by which Marcion and other "Gnostics" evaluated the scriptures motivated Christians to employ a more analytical lens toward the texts they chose to claim as their own.²³ The early appearance of such literary criticism appears to be a significant contribution to the development of a false scripture explanation among Christian writings.

Jewish and intra-Christian challenges existed over who possessed the authority to interpret the scriptures adequately and, subsequently, who was the rightful heir to God's covenants. Although the scriptures continued to be a recognized aspect of ancient Judaism, they were also appropriated by Christians who developed their own interpretive strategies to validate their claims. Out of this environment emerged the false scripture argument.

¹⁹ P.J. Tomson, "The New Testament Canon As the Embodiment of Evolving Christian Attitudes Towards the Jews" in *Canonization and Decanonization: Papers Presented to the International Conference of the Leiden Institute for the Study of Religions (LISOR), Held at Leiden 9-10 January 1997* (ed by A. van der Kooij and K van der Toorn; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 107-131 (107).

²⁰ Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (2nd ed.; trans. the Philadelphia Seminar on Christian Origins. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 24.

²¹ J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *Antioch: City and Imperial Administration in the Later Roman Empire* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1972), 232.

²² Simon, *Verus Israel*, 65-66.

²³ Grant, *Heresy and Criticism*, 112.

1.3. Struggling for Identity

The challenges each community posed toward the others reflects the process of identity formation. Communities can be studied by the texts they produced. By investigating the writings of Christian groups active in the first four centuries, we are able to piece together the way in which communities struggled to designate a sense of identity. Yet, that identity reflects, in part, how the community situated itself in response to other groups of the time.

Within the first four centuries C.E., there was no consistent description for Christian/Christianity or Jew/Judaism. It is often problematic and somewhat anachronistic to employ these terms in the first place since the parameters of each group were not stable. This danger can be avoided, in part, by describing a text with its own terms of self-designation whenever possible. This solution, however, often fails to provide resolution since terms like Jewish and Christian are not always employed within a text, such as the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*. In addition, when these terms do occur in our writings, they are often interpreted by a modern reader in relation to his or her own conceptions and biases.

Since Jewish and Christian identity remained in flux throughout the first few centuries, the study of identity should not be approached in the sense that any proposed identity was established once and for all by our texts. Boundaries of identity are constantly shifting and being renegotiated.²⁴ In fact, the continuous attempts to introduce, define, establish, and reinforce Christian identity through a variety of means illustrates the need perceived by the authors for further clarification despite the representation of that identity as some type of unchanging, static equilibrium. Instead, shaping identity is a process that reflects the relationship shifts between ‘us’ (the Christian authors in this study) and ‘them’ (Jews and other competing Christians). Christians and Jews, Christianity and Judaism are not viewed as two fully formed identities.²⁵ In addition to introducing or establishing identity, texts also function to provide a stable depiction of that identity; to close the border, in a sense. The act of composing a text, then, commits the author and his community to a particular position regarding the debated issues.

²⁴ Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 25, 101.

²⁵ Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 7.

The continual attempts to stabilize identity found in early Christian writings demonstrate the perception that this stability had not been fully attained. Members of a community insisted on crossing the very boundaries being fabricated by the various authors. “Authorities on both sides tried to establish a border, a line that, when crossed, meant that someone had definitely left one group for another. They [Christians and Jews] named such folk ‘Judaizers’ or *minim*, respectively, and attempted to declare their beliefs and practices, their very identities, as out of bounds.”²⁶ In the texts investigated in the current project, the false scriptures writings are not the impetus for social and religious demarcation but one stage in the continual process of shaping and stabilizing group identity when facing continual pressure by other religious groups, whether Jews, Gentiles, or even other Christians. “Christianity, it would seem, or rather, the Church, needed ‘Judaism’ to be a religious other, and some maintained and reified this term as the name of a religion.”²⁷ The fact that the texts arguing for false passages consistently involve so many central markers which characterize Jewish identity, such as monotheism, circumcision, and temple sacrifice, demonstrates that the process of inventing Christian identity is in direct relationship to Jewish identity. “Religious ideas, practices, and innovations permeated that border crossing in both directions.”²⁸

In order to view clearly the process of identity formation, we must understand how Jews and Christians interacted with each other. Generally, there are two sides of the issue. The first position, “the parting of the ways” model, suggests that there was a separation between Jews and Christians in the early second century, often citing the Bar Kochba Revolt of 133-135 as the marker of this separation. Following the ecclesiastical sources, this model presents Judaism and Christianity as two separate groups with clear and stable boundaries. It is assumed that Judaism and Christianity had already coalesced into distinctly recognizable religions; each group quickly developed orthodoxies generally known as Catholicism and Rabbinic Judaism. In addition, various “heresies” formed from those Christians who continued to participate in Jewish practices and customs. These wayward individuals were eventually branded with terms such as Judaizers or apostates. Despite these supposed minor anomalies, Judaism and Christianity remained

²⁶ Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 2.

²⁷ Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 10ff.

²⁸ Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 1.

polarized. This paradigm of early Jewish Christian relations has been championed by J.D.G. Dunn's *The Parting of the Ways* and *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways AD 70 to 135*.²⁹ The two entities of Judaism and Christianity would have little to no contact besides the Christian polemics against Jews and Judaism. Groups described as Jewish Christian were outcasts, not accepted by either camp, and their adherents were portrayed as a plague on the mainstream church.

As so many scholars have already noted, this model is more theological than historical in its interests since it has adopted the ecclesiastical agenda of the patristic authors.³⁰ As scholars reviewed the evidence (or lack thereof) for the ecclesiastical model, it became apparent that the paradigm was inaccurate given the myriad of sources available that did not conform to its "orthodoxy" and "heresy" dichotomy. Fundamental works by W. Bauer³¹ and Daniel Boyarin³² chipped away at the ecclesiastical model by demonstrating the diverse nature of the early Christian movement and its theology as well as the prominence of the Jewish Christian 'minority' in certain regions.³³ One recent example of this trend is *The Ways that Never Parted*,³⁴ a collection of essays detailing the inaccuracy of the previous paradigm and suggesting that Judaism and Christianity had much more contact with each other than previously realized.

According to "the ways that never parted" model, Judaism and Christianity were not so neatly separated. Judaism and Christianity cannot be disentangled from each other until the

²⁹ J.D.G. Dunn, *The Parting of the Ways* (SCM Press: Philadelphia, 1991); *idem*, *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways AD 70 to 135* (Mohr: Tübingen, 1992).

³⁰ See Judith Lieu's "'The Parting of the Ways': Theological Construct or Historical Reality?" *JSNT* 56 (1994): 101-119.

³¹ Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (2nd ed.; trans. the Philadelphia Seminar on Christian Origins. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971).

³² Boyarin, *Border Lines*; *idem*, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999), 1-21.

³³ Bauer's *Orthodoxy and Heresy* dismisses the paradigm that a Christian orthodoxy or mainstream movement ever existed in the first four centuries. Boyarin details how the establishment of two religions, that is, entities labeled Judaism and Christianity, occurred at the social intersections between those now termed Jews and Christians.

³⁴ Adam Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, *The Ways that Never Parted* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

fourth or fifth century. Judaism and Christianity did not develop in isolation from each other nor was the interaction between the two groups limited – two ideas central to the parting of the ways model.³⁵ Those scholars who hold the second position offer an alternate interpretation of the existence of Judaizers as more of the norm than the exception. Accordingly, the ecclesiastical sources are considered guilty of presenting a prescription for the type of Christian communities the various authors hope to construct rather than a description of the actual situation of those very communities. Texts from this time document the recurring polemics of one side against another, whether Christian against Jew or Christian against Christian. The frequency of these polemics demonstrates that there must have been a need for such posturing against those considered “other.”

As Judith Lieu points out, “Conflict over the interpretation of the text is the locus for conflicting claims to legitimate identity.”³⁶ The anti-Jewish attacks are actually a disguise for the author’s “more immediate goal in shaping Christian identity.”³⁷ By eclipsing the claims of the Jews, a text can negate the similar claims of those Christians whose respect for the Jewish scriptures was so great as to entail their adherence to the various cultic laws prescribed by the Torah.

The numerous Jewish and Christian authors of the time did not write in a situation where their respective communities recognized their counterparts as something other. Rather, these authors used their texts to create this situation. The precise relationship between Jews and Christians can only be determined by examining specific situations in time and geography. In fact, Judaism and Christianity maintained a dynamic relationship where each was indistinguishable from the other. It was this reality that motivated some Christian authors to argue, for various reasons, a need to distinguish Christianity from Judaism. The divorce of Judaism and Christianity did not occur until as late as the fourth century.

Daniel Boyarin argues that the focus of the Christian heresiologists was to manufacture a means of demarcating Christians from Jews and identifying Jews as something other than

³⁵ Annette Yoshiko Reed and Adam H. Becker, “Introduction: Traditional Models and New Directions” in *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (ed. Adam Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed; Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 1-34 (2).

³⁶ Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 34.

³⁷ Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 81.

Christians. He also claims that at the same time, and for similar reasons, rabbinic circles were consolidating their own authority and identity against the *minim*, a term which did not originally target the Christians but remnants of other Jewish groups. Rabbis identified the Sadducees as something other than the rabbinic movement while the Pharisees were the precursors from which rabbinic Judaism developed.³⁸ With the establishment of an ‘other’, a heresy of their own, the Rabbis developed themselves into an orthodox ‘Church’. Yet, Boyarin is quick to note that Jewish orthodoxy did not develop in reaction to, and later than, a Christian one but for its own independent reasons.³⁹

Reed and Becker “suggest that Jews and Christians (or at least the elites among them) may have been engaged in the task of ‘parting’ throughout Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, *precisely because* the two never really ‘parted’ during that period with the degree of decisiveness or finality needed to render either tradition irrelevant to the self-definition of the other, or even to make participation in both an unattractive or inconceivable option.”⁴⁰ The “ways that never parted” model of Christian origins suggests that the writings from the first four centuries are aimed at delineating an author’s group from the myriad of others in a process of delineation. This is so because there were no clear boundaries between Jews and Christians or even among those groups that considered themselves Christians.

The present dissertation follows the “ways that never parted” model. The examined texts illustrate the underlying notion of the paradigm that religious identity and social boundaries continued to be debated well into the fourth century. As will be seen in the following chapters, each text under investigation presents an author’s view of what it means to be a follower of Christ in a time when there are no stable boundaries among Christians. Yet, as will be discussed shortly, this dissertation assumes that the authors of *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*, the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, and the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* each wrote for the benefit of a community. Thus, each author’s views are not his alone but somehow relate to the social group to which he belongs. Through the texts, each author and his corresponding group aim to validate their own choices on theology and religious practices. Their choices are a response to other Jewish and

³⁸ Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 45, 59, 63.

³⁹ Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 71.

⁴⁰ Reed and Becker, “Traditional Models and New Directions,” 23.

Christian groups active in the same region or possibly the same community; they function implicitly to disenfranchise the other groups from equal standing regarding authority and tradition.

2. Shaping Christian Identity: The False Scripture Argument

Christian claims to the correct interpretation of the scriptures are the foundation of the false passages rhetoric. My project investigates how social groups which share a common heritage and uphold conflicting claims of identity and authority coexist. This tactic reflects, at least in part, a battle over the Jewish scriptures: who could claim their ownership and why are other groups wrong in any such attempt? As the above discussion illustrates, any battle over proper exegesis involves an assessment of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity.⁴¹ The false scripture strategy is one example of this process of differentiation. The overlapping usage of the scriptures among Jewish and Christian communities engendered a movement among Christians to appropriate the writings. However, whereas the Jews understood the scriptures as needing further clarification and elaboration, as found in the Mishnah, Christians perceived the scriptures as the prophetic precursor to the teachings of the Christ as told in the writings of the New Testament. “Texts play a central part not just in the documentation of what it meant to be Christian, but in actually shaping Christianity.”⁴² Horbury 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.⁴³ The same cannot be said about the early Christian authors who typically included an argument of interpretative superiority.

2.1. Defining Identity

A key aspect of this project involves appreciating how the false scripture argument contributes to the construction of social identity. Jenkins offers a thorough definition of social identity.

⁴¹ William Horbury, “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, Netherlands: Pharos, 1992), 72-103 (72).

⁴² Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 7.

⁴³ Horbury, “Jews and Christians on the Bible,” 74-6.

It is the systematic establishment and signification, between individuals, between collectivities, and between individuals and collectivities, of relationships of similarity and difference. Taken – as they can only be – together, similarity and difference are the dynamic principles of identity, the heart of social life....Social identity is our understanding of who we are and of who other people are, and, reciprocally, other people's understanding of themselves and others (which includes us). Social identity is, therefore, no more essential than meaning; it too is the product of agreement and disagreement, it too is negotiable.⁴⁴

Defining 'us' is, by default, to define 'them'; the difference becomes manifest at the edges of the borders of group identity.⁴⁵ By recognizing similarities and differences in relationships with others, we either designate significance or insignificance to them. By doing so, social relations and borders are established. Group identification designates the inclusion of some while social categorization indicates the exclusion of others.⁴⁶

Identity is shaped and inscribed within communities through a variety of means. Identity functions to illustrate a shared perception between people while at the same time distinguish some people from others, to discern 'us' from 'them'. Identity, as well as its construction or destruction, is a social phenomenon. The construction of identity is a social function since it involves negotiating boundaries and relations with and within social groups.⁴⁷ Texts function as insignias in the melee of establishing identity, explicitly engaging the current battles while implicitly claiming victories over issues previously fought. Initially, the debates between Judaism and Christianity may have been manifest as oral discussions that were only later encapsulated within texts. The relationship represented in the texts between Jews and Christians is a result of previous social interaction.⁴⁸ Often, writings are the extent of the physical remains to indicate the progression of a community's negotiations of identity, even though we must recognize that any such account is likely laced with the bias of the surviving community.

⁴⁴ Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 4-5.

⁴⁵ Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 80-81.

⁴⁶ Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 83.

⁴⁷ Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 7-11.

⁴⁸ Stock, *Listening For the Text*, 154-155.

Throughout this dissertation, I assume that the texts are representative of the communities who once utilized them. Brian Stock offers a definition for such a textual community as “a group that arises somewhere in the interstices between the imposition of the written word and the articulation of a certain type of social organization. It is an interpretive community, but it is also a social entity.”⁴⁹ It is a community that bases its social organization around a text or texts which harbors some significance for the constituents. Those who read or hear the texts engage in a process of education where the text serves to bind members of the community together, despite any previous social differences, such as ethnicity. By participating in a text, whether it is considered scripture or later supplemental literature, the members are somehow changed. Their relationship with each other as well as others outside the community is transformed; the lives of the constituents are organized by a common understanding of the text(s). Furthermore, the texts function as templates for how to interpret scriptures.⁵⁰ By analyzing the presentation of Christians and Jews among the early Christian writings, the relationship of Jews and Christians may be further illuminated.

Both Judaism and Christianity are oral as well as literate communities. Stock implies that the debates between Judaism and Christianity were initially manifest as oral discussions that were only later encapsulated within texts. Therefore, the relationship represented in the texts between Jews and Christians is a result of previous social interaction.⁵¹ The act of composing a text, then, commits the author and his community to a particular position regarding the debated issues. In the texts considered here, the arguments about false scriptures are not the impetus for social and religious demarcation but one stage in the continual process of shaping group identity when facing continual pressure by other religious groups, whether Jews, Gentiles, or even other Christians. It is likely that the texts focus on establishing a certain identity because there are members of that community whose identity has become dangerously ambiguous to the author.

One pitfall to avoid is treating the selected texts as derived from some monolithic source, whether described as ‘orthodoxy’ or ‘heresy’, which shares common views and theologies. What has been largely underrepresented in previous scholarship on the false passages argument is an

⁴⁹ Stock, *Listening For the Text*, 150.

⁵⁰ Stock, *Listening For the Text*, 151.

⁵¹ Stock, *Listening For the Text*, 154-5.

appreciation of how each text offers a unique compilation of many of the common elements in its own chosen configuration. “What has become clear is that the historian – and so, likewise, I would suggest the theologian – looking back, cannot define who were the early Christians, or what was Christianity, by adopting one set of clear boundaries.”⁵² In order to understand the ways the false scripture argument is used to construct varying descriptions of Christian identity, each text must be examined independently.

Since archaeological and sociological data is often lacking regarding the historical context of these writings, the less tangible social depictions of the texts will serve as guides. However, a disadvantage of this method must be acknowledged. The various representations of identity are literary constructs.⁵³ Perceiving the image of Christian communities from the ‘reality’ provided by the various writings may reflect more of a single author’s ideal rather than the actual religious traditions and social relations of that author’s community. The image of the Jew portrayed in early Christian writings is more of a straw man which encompasses the intended targets of the author and his context. There is no doubt that such an imagined figure combines elements of a rhetorical projection of the other intertwined with the reality of the author’s contemporary social situation. Yet, it is difficult to determine the balance of the image and the reality.⁵⁴

Even so, we as scholars should not be seduced into adopting the virtual images of continuity or discontinuity presented in the polemical writings. As a text encourages and enforces one of these choices, our analysis should recognize the innate existence of the other option.⁵⁵ In similar fashion, the use of defining terms like Christian or Christianity can be identified and described only by reference to Jew and Judaism and, to a lesser degree, pagans. “The division between what is ‘Jewish’ and what is ‘non-Jewish’ is ours, not that of the texts.”⁵⁶

⁵² Lieu, *Christian Identity* 145.

⁵³ Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 8-9, 27.

⁵⁴ See Lieu’s *Image and Reality*, 1-2, 277.

⁵⁵ Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 177.

⁵⁶ Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 119.

My investigation, then, is a study of how Christian writings function to inscribe a particular identity among its constituency.

2.2. The False Scripture Writings

One purpose of the current work is to illuminate further the tapestry of interpretative strategies found in the ancient world by examining an interpretive approach often overlooked by modern scholarship. The dissertation investigates how early Christian writings functioned to construct social identity. The study of how identity is constructed through the rhetorical strategies of early Christian texts is not uncommon. Nevertheless, this study targets a specific rhetorical tactic that has received little attention in connection with the study of religious identity. Specifically, the present work is an investigation into a literary tactic I refer to as the false scripture argument. According to the false scripture argument, false passages have been inserted within the compiled writings of the authentic regulations of biblical law. This literary strategy is found rarely in a limited grouping of writings, namely *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*, the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, and the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*. These texts were written to establish one group's interpretation as legitimate in the face of interpretation espoused by other competing groups.

The false scripture argument is an important hermeneutic by which early Christians generated a sense of religious identity. As discussed above, Jewish and Christian communities in the first four centuries struggled to define their own parameters. In the process of self-definition, each community also invented identities for their social and religious competitors. Thus, the false scripture argument participates in identity formation.

On the one hand, the claim that inauthentic tradition exists allows the author to claim that he and his community are heirs to the authentic ways. Since there are false passages, as the argument goes, there must be a hermeneutical key to discern truth from falsehood. Conveniently, each of the three texts examined here contains such an explanation. Since the audience has access to this information, they consider themselves members of the elect. The religious life of the community is shaped by adhering only to the supposedly authentic regulations, as dictated by the particular manifestation of the false scripture argument. Community members avoid other beliefs and practices because they have been designated as false. Subsequently, their religious

path remains unhindered by the very falsehoods to which other groups have fallen prey. In this way, the religious life of the author's community is validated.

On the other hand, the false scripture argument functions to disenfranchise other groups who likely present some level of competition. Members of his group consider themselves the rightful recipients of the genuine traditions of God. Anyone who fails to accept this premise is perceived as an outsider. It will be argued below that the portions of scripture targeted as false in each text's false scripture argument are chosen for the specific reason of invalidating the traditions of neighboring groups. In essence, the false scripture argument is derived from the debate about scriptural authority. Jews and Christians were engaged in a debate over who had the right to interpret the scriptures. By labeling certain traditions as false and then associating these traditions with other groups (or simply making established associations more obvious), the false scripture argument works to invalidate an author's perceived competitors.

As discussed above, most Christians seem to have accepted and adopted the Hebrew Bible as part of their own scripture.⁵⁷ This act likely added to Judaism's prestige among many Christians.⁵⁸ The false scripture argument may be a response to the adoption of the "Jewish" scriptures. Some Christians might accept the scriptures as sacred while at the same time dividing their contents into authentic and false categories. If false passages exist in the scriptures then there must be a means to discern the true portions from the false ones. The false scripture writings present this solution in the form of the life and teachings of Christ. In this way, Christians are able to continue using the same scripture used by Jews; however, only membership in particular Christian communities provides the authentic laws of God.

For many Christians, the argument that the commandments in the Torah were, after all, God's words may have carried more weight than the often torturous argumentations to the effect that God had abolished his own law. For many pagans and Christians, the antiquity of Judaism was a very important factor – we should not forget that throughout antiquity it was an unquestioned axiom that the oldest is the best, including religious matters.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Marcion is an important exception to this generalization.

⁵⁸ Liebeschuetz, *Antioch*, 232-3.

⁵⁹ Pieter Van der Horst, "Jews and Christians in Antioch at the End of the Fourth Century" in *Christian-Jewish Relations Through the Centuries* (ed. Stanley Porter and Brook W.R. Pearson; T&T New York: Clark International, 2000), 228-238 (232).

There is no doubt that the prestige associated with the writings that were believed to contain God's laws was respected by both Jews and Christians. Yet, the false scripture writings present a reformed version of God's law based on the interests of each respective author. Elements of the scriptures not considered necessary by these authors is systematically redefined as false. As such, the obligation to observe such inauthentic regulations is lifted.

The current project is a comprehensive investigation of the literary phenomenon that claims there are false passages in the scriptures. According to the false scripture argument, portions of scripture are considered false due either to their temporary nature or because they were not instituted directly by God. The argument does not discount the validity of the scriptures as a whole; rather, it presumes that the scriptures do contain God's regulations and institutions to which any believing community must adhere.⁶⁰

The false scripture argument appears, to my knowledge, within only three texts: *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*, the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, and the *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies*. These writings were written between the second and fourth centuries within Christian communities. I argue that the label "Christian" can be applied to each text, although I acknowledge the difficulties that accompany such an association – especially in regard to the *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies*.⁶¹ My decision is based on the observation that each document allots a privileged position to Christ. As the following chapters will show, each text argues that the authentic portions of scripture can be discerned from the false ones by properly understanding the life and teachings of Christ.⁶² Even though the following chapters will provide

⁶⁰ According to this definition, Marcion does not appear as a direct subject of the current study. Furthermore, the fragmentary nature of Marcion's actual writings provides a difficult obstacle when attempting to understand how an author's text is used to construct identity – a crucial aspect of this dissertation.

⁶¹ A considerable part of the on-going discussion of the Pseudo-Clementines has focused on the debated classification of these eight writings as Jewish Christian on account of the significant markers of Christian and Jewish identity that are fused so fluidly by the authors.

⁶² Although each text does allow for the reader's own recognition of contradictory passages in the scripture, proof for each author's choice in assigning certain portions of the scriptures as inauthentic as well as a comprehensive and systematic explanation for the existence of such passages relies upon understanding Christ's role on earth.

a comprehensive investigation into each of the three texts, it is useful at this stage to present summaries of the writings.

Although only known from a later source, *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora* appears to be a second-century correspondence between a “Gnostic”⁶³ leader and one of his initiates. In the letter, Ptolemy educates Flora on the nature of the Mosaic law. Specifically, he claims that not all of the Mosaic laws are authentic to God. Some were established by Moses while other are attributed to the Jewish elders. In addition, a demiurge figure instituted other portions of the law that proved imperfect, a reflection of his nature. According to Ptolemy, God the Father sent Christ into the world to perfect the laws of the demiurge and purge the inauthentic portions of scripture.

The *Didascalia Apostolorum* is a third-century text from Syria devoted to the explanation of proper church order and communal relations. Among these issues, the author discusses the notion that most of the Mosaic law was designed as a punishment for the people of Israel for worshipping the golden calf at Mt. Sinai. Although the Didascalist considers the Decalogue to be authentic law, the various regulations of the Mosaic law established by God are a Second Legislation designed to complicate religious life. Christ's role is to return the true manner of religious life by expunging the elements of the Second Legislation. Those who continue to practice the Second Legislation are condemned as enemies of God.

The Pseudo-Clementines *Homilies* is also from Syria and has been dated to the fourth century. The *Homilies* claims to document a series of debates between the Apostle Peter and Simon Magus. The false passages are one discussion point between the two figures. On the one hand, Simon claims that the scriptures can be marshaled to contradict the existence of only one God, the nobility of the patriarchs, and theological positions such as monotheism. On the other hand, Peter explains these contradictions as evidence that inauthentic passages have been inserted into the scriptures by Satan and his forces. The teachings of the true prophet, who has been manifest in the figures of Adam, Moses, and especially Christ, provide the best means to distinguish the true passages from the false ones.

⁶³ The function and accuracy of this term will be taken up in the next chapter (chapter 2) on *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*.

Even though these texts echo various sentiments from other authors from the first four centuries, the claim of false passages is unique to this subset of Christian writings. As the above summaries illustrate, and the following chapters will detail, there are strong similarities among the three writings. I am not the first to notice this connection. A variety of other scholars have discovered connections among this subset of ancient texts. In order to illustrate the lack of attention given to the false scripture phenomenon, a handful of surveys of the false scripture argument must be highlighted.

2.3. A History of Scholarship on the False Scripture Phenomenon

Other scholars have noted the existence of the false scripture argument. In particular, specialists on each individual document often point out the appearance of the argument within each text. Yet, commentaries on the respective writings rarely involve a detailed discussion of the false scripture argument that is shared by the *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*, the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, and the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*. Regarding *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*, G. Quispel's commentary carefully investigates this text's notion of inauthentic regulations that have been instituted within the Mosaic law.⁶⁴ Although the focus of his examination is on the letter, he does briefly compare Ptolemy's explanation of inauthentic portions of the Mosaic law with the idea of false passages found in the Pseudo-Clementines.⁶⁵ Research on the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, particularly R.H. Connolly's introduction to his translation of the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, includes a detailed analysis of the Second Legislation, noting a comparison to both *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora* and the Pseudo-Clementines.⁶⁶ Yet, the topic is not specifically mentioned in a more recent edition of the *Didascalia* by A. Vööbus.⁶⁷ A number of experts on the

⁶⁴ Gilles Quispel, "La Lettre de Ptolemee a Flora," in *Gnostic Studies I* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1974) 70-102.

⁶⁵ Quispel, "La Lettre," 86-89. Quispel concludes that there is no interdependency between the two writings (87) though he vaguely suggests that the false scripture argument did not originate with Ptolemy (89).

⁶⁶ *Didascalia Apostolorum: The Syriac Version Translated and Accompanied by the Verona Latin Fragments* (trans. R. Hugh Connolly; Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1929), lvii-xci. On *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora* see lxxv-lxxviii. On the Pseudo-Clementines see lxxxv-lxxxvi.

⁶⁷ Arthur Vööbus, *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac I and II*, CSCO 401-2, 407-8 (Louvain:

Pseudo-Clementines have observed the pervasive claim regarding false passages, found most notably in the *Homilies*.⁶⁸ This is not surprising since the Pseudo-Clementines are perhaps the most well known location for the false scripture argument. Even so, comparisons with either of the other two writings investigated here are rare or short-lived at best.

Besides works devoted to the individual texts, there are, to my knowledge, only a handful of other works that observe the connection between some or, even less frequently, all of these writings. In other words, scholarship seems largely unaware of or uninterested in the false scripture rhetoric as a literary strategy. This project aims to provide the first comprehensive study on the false scripture literary argument as it occurs in early Christian literature.

Adolf von Harnack includes a brief note about the existence of the false scripture phenomenon. In Harnack's model, most early Christians (except for Marcion and his followers) were unwilling to dissociate their beliefs and practices from the scriptures. "At this time...it was simply impossible to reject the Old Testament without severing any and all connection to the Christian religion with it and declaring it to be the book of a false God."⁶⁹ Harnack argues that Christians fought to maintain a claim to the scriptures and, accordingly, their validity. Yet, he also mentions that some Christians did reject portions of the scriptures, as evidenced by "Ptolemaeus and pseudo-Clement, among others" and is "itself highly deserving of attention from scholars."⁷⁰ Yet, to my knowledge, such a study has not occurred since Harnack published his observation almost a century ago.

Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 1979).

⁶⁸ In particular, see H. Waitz, *Die Pseudoklementinen, Homilien und Recognitionen: Eine Quellenkritische Untersuchung* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche, 1904), 88-116. Waitz includes a comparison, however brief, to the Didascalia (198-199). Also see H.J.W. Drijvers, "Adam and the True Prophet in the Pseudo-Clementines" in *Loyalitätskonflikte in der Religionsgeschichte; Festschrift für Carsten Colpe* (ed. by Christophe Elsas and Hans G. Kippenberg; Würzburg: Königshausen and Neumann, 1990), 314-323 (317-320).

⁶⁹ Adolf von Harnack, *Marcion: The Gospel of the Alien God* (trans. John E. Steely and Lyle D. Bierma; Durham, NC: Labyrinth Press, 1990), 134.

⁷⁰ Harnack, *Marcion*, 177 n.1.

Hans-Joachim Schoeps also investigated the false passages theory of the Pseudo-Clementines.⁷¹ He concluded that the false passages theory arose early in Christian history, perhaps as early as the Matthean community in the first century. Although he ascribes the *Pseudo-Clementines* version of false passages theory to the Ebionites, he also recognizes that the *Didascalia* also presented a notion that the Jewish scriptures contain false material. Schoeps found that the *Didascalia*'s claim of inauthentic scripture closely parallels that of the *Pseudo-Clementines*.⁷² In addition, Schoeps briefly mentions *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora* and its idea of discerning the law of God from other inferior law.⁷³ Although Schoeps' analysis recognizes the existence of a common hermeneutical approach to the scriptures, it is very brief and does not adequately represent the importance of the false scripture argument.

Georg Strecker briefly points out a connection between the Pseudo-Clementines, the *Didascalia*, and *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora* as part of his introduction to the notion of the false passages in the Pseudo-Clementines.⁷⁴ He does not pursue the connection, although he does compare the *Pseudo-Clementines* and *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*. Strecker concludes, against Quispel, that the Pseudo-Clementines are not dependent on Ptolemy's text.⁷⁵ In another article, however, Strecker weighs in on the issue of whether the *Didascalia* is dependent on either of the other two writings, or vice versa.⁷⁶ In discussing the potential connections between the *Pseudo-Clementines* and the *Didascalia*, he cautions that "we cannot assume that it was literarily dependent on the *Didascalia* or vice versa, in spite of their geographical proximity."⁷⁷ Although

⁷¹ Hans-Joachim Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentum* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1949).

⁷² Schoeps, *Judenchristentum*, 150-151, 155, 158-159, 167, 178-184, 187.

⁷³ Schoeps, *Judenchristentum*, 187.

⁷⁴ Georg Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum in den Pseudoklementinen* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1958), 162-186 (167).

⁷⁵ Strecker, *Judenchristentum*, 170-171, especially 171 n.1.

⁷⁶ Georg Strecker, "On the Problem of Jewish Christianity," appendix to Walter Bauer's *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (2nd ed. trans. The Philadelphia Seminar on Christian Origins. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971).

⁷⁷ Strecker, "On the Problem of Jewish Christianity," 258.

the second discussion is considerably more detailed than the first,⁷⁸ it remains only superficial in regard to the false scripture argument. To be fair, the article was not designed for such an aim but instead was intended to demonstrate the continued existence of some type of Jewish Christianity during and after the second century. Yet, Strecker relegates the false scripture argument to a subset of Jewish Christianity and its struggle over the proper interpretation and implementation of the Mosaic law. The reader is unfortunately and incorrectly left with the perception that this type of literary strategy is common among so-called Jewish Christian writings.

Jean Daniélou describes the false scripture argument as commonly found within the Pseudo-Clementines and *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*.⁷⁹ After barely describing the false passages hermeneutic, Daniélou mentions (in only one sentence) that *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora* may have been influenced by the Jewish Christianity of the Pseudo-Clementines.⁸⁰ Elsewhere during his discussion of Jewish Christianity, he cites Epiphanius' description of the Ebionites as those who refuse to accept the entire Pentateuch but reject certain passages (*Panarion* XXX, 18). His awareness of a similar attitude in the Didascalia is relegated to a mere footnote.⁸¹ Once again, the larger phenomenon of the false scripture argument eluded the attention it deserves.

Robert Grant discusses the false scripture argument as it appears in both the *Homilies* and *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*. He states that the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* is “a heretical Christian parallel to Marcion.”⁸² He explains that the text offers an interpretation of passages which are believed to be interpolated due to their contradictory nature. Using a type of literary criticism, argues Grant, Marcion and the author of the *Homilies* invented a hermeneutic of false scripture to resolve the apparent contradictions. Grant claims that this practice also appears in

⁷⁸ Strecker's appendix in Bauer's *Orthodoxy and Heresy* contains the most extensive analysis of the false scripture phenomenon I have found.

⁷⁹ Jean Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (trans. John A. Baker; London; Darton, Longman, & Todd, 1964), 60-66.

⁸⁰ Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, 60.

⁸¹ Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, 61 n.16.

⁸² Grant, *Heresy and Criticism*, 44.

Ptolemy's Letter to Flora.⁸³ In his brief analysis, Grant offers only a two paragraph summary of the explanation for the origin of false passages in the *Homilies*; namely, that they were added during the transmission of the Mosaic law. Moses, however, is not at fault since, as the *Homilies* relates, he was aware of the eventual corruption of scripture. Furthermore, Grant notes that the false passages can only be discerned by the true prophet.⁸⁴ In a subsequent chapter devoted to “The Hidden Agenda of Ptolemaeus,” Grant devotes five pages of investigation into Ptolemy’s Letter, summarizing the tripartite divisions of the Law. However, he offers no comparison with the *Homilies* or the Didascalia. In fact, the Didascalia is mentioned later in Grant’s book regarding an unrelated topic and even then only for two sentences.⁸⁵

Grant never places the three false scripture texts in the context of one another as representative of a larger phenomenon. Despite this oversight, Grant does observe that the interpretive approaches of so-called “heretics” like Marcion, Ptolemy, and the author of the *Homilies* forced all Christians to think more critically about the scriptures to which each group claimed as their own.⁸⁶ The false scripture argument was a device that encouraged a variety of groups to further clarify their identity as Christians; it was one reason of many, to be sure, for Christians to reevaluate their connection to the scriptures and the regulations contained within.

In providing a wonderful summary of Jewish and Christian interpretations of the Old Testament among patristic writers, William Horbury argues that the false passages argument is a concession to the Marcionite attack on the Jewish scriptures.⁸⁷ He demonstrates that although there were other texts and authors, such as the *Epistle of Barnabas*, which employed an allegorical approach in order to interpret and appropriate the Jewish scriptures within a Christian theological framework, the false passages theory, as found in the Pseudo-Clementines, provided a means to fight literalism with literalism.

⁸³ Grant, *Heresy and Criticism*, 45, 48-50.

⁸⁴ Grant, *Heresy and Criticism*, 45

⁸⁵ Grant, *Heresy and Criticism*, 91.

⁸⁶ Grant, *Heresy and Criticism*, 112.

⁸⁷ Horbury, “Old Testament Interpretation,” 758-760.

In discussing the process of interpreting the Old Testament using the idea of false passages, Horbury briefly mentions how *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora* employs a mixture of both literal and allegorical interpretations of the Jewish scriptures.⁸⁸ Horbury quickly adds that portions of the *Didascalia* are similar to the other false scripture writings. Like *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*, according to Horbury, the *Didascalia* was written as a response to Marcionite influence.⁸⁹ Admittedly, Horbury's article is not designed to offer an in-depth analysis of the various writings he references. Yet, indirectly, he does discuss that the false scripture argument offered a means to validate whether Christians were able to accept or reject the various ceremonial practices of the Jews. Unfortunately, Horbury does not extend the discussion by detailing the connection between the false scripture argument and the construction of religious identity in the face of religious competition.

Marcel Simon displays his familiarity with the false scripture argument, especially as it appears within the *Didascalia*.⁹⁰ He briefly mentions *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora* and its tripartite division of the law.⁹¹ Although the Pseudo-Clementines are discussed, the *Homilies'* notion of false passages is not engaged. Thus, Simon does not recognize the larger false scripture phenomenon in the early centuries despite his discussion of all three writings. In his extensive discussion of Jewish Christian relations, Simon notes that the rabbis considered all of the scriptures useful and important⁹² – an idea that stands in direct contradiction to the false scripture argument – and devotes serious attention throughout his work to the process of how Jewish and Christian groups fought to distinguish their identity from one another.

Most recently, at the 2006 annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature/American Academy of Religion conference, specifically a section on “Christian Apocrypha,” a panel of experts on the Pseudo-Clementines (particularly Nicole Kelley, Annette Reed, and F. Stanley Jones) decided that the notion of the false passages in the Clementines has been under-

⁸⁸ Horbury, “Old Testament Interpretation,” 759.

⁸⁹ Horbury, “Old Testament Interpretation,” 760.

⁹⁰ Simon, *Verus Israel*, 80-82, 88-89, 313-14.

⁹¹ Simon, *Verus Israel*, 70-71.

⁹² Simon, *Verus Israel*, 148.

appreciated. The panelists observed that the false passages theory commonly appears in tangential Pseudo-Clementine studies but has not received adequate attention by scholars. The panel anticipated a comprehensive analysis of the false passages argument in the near future in order to realize its importance in the study of this corpus of writings.⁹³ The present work was developed, in part, based on a similar observation.

There are undoubtedly other authors who have observed connections between some or all of the texts I have labeled as false scripture writings. Yet, the preceding discussion demonstrates that scholarship has largely underappreciated or even ignored the importance of the false scripture argument. As the above summaries show, those scholars who have even observed the phenomenon have treated the matter with brevity. What follows is a comprehensive study of the false scripture argument. My work builds on previous research on the tripartite scheme of *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*, the Second Legislation of the Didascalia, and the false passages of the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*. However, the approach of the dissertation is both to examine these texts individually as well as place them in context with each other. More specifically, my aim is to explain how the false scripture argument of each text contributed to the construction of group identity in the second through fourth centuries.

3. Project Outline

My dissertation builds on the methods of Daniel Boyarin and Judith Lieu presented in the above discussion. I follow Boyarin's emphasis that Judaism or Christianity existed in flux in the first few centuries; neither was a stable entity separate from the other. Instead, he suggests that they are both ideals, envisioned by a host of religious communities which struggled to decide how to shape the boundaries of these constructs. The actual variety of groups that have been categorized as Jewish, Christian, or Jewish-Christian lie elsewhere on the continuum between these two poles.

Boyarin claims that the actual delineation of "Christianity" was brought about by the literature. Various groups attempted to carve out their own niche within the socio-religious landscape. He argues that Judaism and Christianity had no stable boundaries. In reality, there

⁹³ Having already begun the current dissertation on that very topic, I was excited at the panel's suggestion.

was considerable interaction between the two constructs regarding “[r]eligious ideas, practices and innovations.”⁹⁴ Boyarin states that the partitioning that distinguished Judaism and Christianity was artificially imposed by the writings of the period. “Moreover, adopting...a perspective that refuses the option of seeing Christian and Jew, Christianity and Judaism, as fully formed, bounded, and separate entities and identities in late antiquity...will help us, I hope, to perceive more fully the work of those early Christian and Jewish writers as they were making the difference.”⁹⁵ The texts were written by community leaders who attempted to construct a boundary that, when crossed, demarcated a person as outside of the believing community.

As Boyarin explains, to construct identity is to deal in the realm of the abstract; to impose divisions where they do not exist, or are not fully recognized, within a community. An investigation of identity construction can illuminate an author’s concerns and the matters that concern the group. In fact, Boyarin claims that the idea of a “religion” was the result of the process of identity formation when Christians searched for ways to describe themselves as something other than Jews. “One might say that Judaism and Christianity were invented in order to explain the fact that there were Jews and Christians.”⁹⁶ He continues to explain that the terms “Judaism” and “Christianity” represent various manifestations of similar trends and common criteria which exist on a type of continuum. At the ends are the ideal forms of Christianity and Judaism that only exist as constructs; in reality, each group of Jews and Christians appear as gradations along the continuum.⁹⁷ Therefore, defining Judaism and Christianity is a subjective process that needs to be situated contextually.⁹⁸ Specifically, each text must be examined on its own terms to realize its unique tendencies, influences, and claims.

In addition to Boyarin, I also rely upon the work of Judith Lieu. Lieu approaches the construction of Christian identity by examining how “Christian identity” manifests in the variety

⁹⁴ Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 1.

⁹⁵ Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 7.

⁹⁶ Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 21.

⁹⁷ Boyarin further explains that this model is similar to the terms short and tall, which are subjective terms based on context (*Border Lines*, 25).

⁹⁸ Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 23-26.

of early Christian writings. She emphasizes a text's own terms of self-definition rather than associating modern conceptions with ancient authors. This method of approaching Christian identity illuminates the self-perceived authority and power of the authors/texts to re-invent the traditions of the audience while silencing those considered outsiders.⁹⁹ A text contributes to the formation of identity by depicting a formed and stabilized account of that identity. The literary landscape of the first four centuries contributed to the formation of Christian identity as something distinct from its Jewish heritage.

Even so, Boayin and Lieu's methods run the risk of becoming overly dependent upon a literary presentation. It is crucial to remain aware of the rhetorical constructions present within each text. An important aspect of Lieu's work is the observation that the ancient texts contain only an image of what was really occurring in the past; that is, a text represents one version of history and may not present the reality of the author's situation. She considers the notion that the social identity for a community depicted by a text may be more prescriptive than descriptive. Lieu explains that Christians saw two worlds: the imagined and the real. Of the latter she states:

Christians shared this world with their Jewish and pagan neighbors, unavoidably aware of them since often they were their family, their friends, their 'colleagues' and indeed their old selves. Then there was the social world or symbolic universe; the world of meaning and values which shaped their self-understanding and gave meaning to their experience, a world which was often at odds with the dominant social structures of the former world. This world too is people by Jews and by pagans, although now their relationship with them is very different.¹⁰⁰

Rather than maintaining an identity that had already been established at some earlier time, in reality that text may intend to impose a particular set of novel practices or beliefs upon the community. "Clearly, literary presentation cannot automatically be taken as directly mirroring external reality but frequently meets particular needs, internal or external to the literature itself....Therefore we shall speak of 'image and reality', while recognizing that neither of these is static or accessible free of interpretation...."¹⁰¹ As the on-going relations between Jews and Christians continued, the model(s) presented in the community's writings become ingrained in its members. In this way, image became reality through the adoption of an author's ideas.

⁹⁹ Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 25.

¹⁰⁰ Lieu, *Image and Reality*, 277.

¹⁰¹ Lieu, *Image and Reality*, 2.

“[A] rhetoric of reversal of the formative symbols of the opposition group, particularly by a breakaway sect, is a familiar and sociologically recognized means of differentiation and self-justification.”¹⁰² This notion can be applied to the false scripture argument. The interpretation of scripture was a key marker of religious identity to both Jews and Christians. The false scripture writings present a radical interpretation of this formative symbol in order to (re-)formulate the community’s understanding of biblical law. According to Lieu, “charges of corruption and falsification” of the scriptures are hallmarks of competition and discontinuity.¹⁰³

Like Boyarin, Lieu discusses how the construction of self simultaneously constructs the identity of the other. “The creation of otherness is a literary enterprise.”¹⁰⁴ To recognize a description of the other entails examining why certain elements are not welcomed among the given individual or community.¹⁰⁵ “Jewish identity, negatively constructed, came to constitute the necessary foil for the construction of Christian identity.”¹⁰⁶ Portraying another group as the other also functions to describe them as less than a threat and more of an inadequate alternative.¹⁰⁷

Lieu’s overarching aim is to examine Christian writings from the first two centuries in order to recognize how the various authors depicted what they considered to be ‘Christianity’ in the face of pagan and Jewish deterrents. Boyarin discusses the need to further define “the differentiating factors” and recognize “the forces tending toward similarity” in the relationship between Judaism and Christianity.¹⁰⁸ Each author admits to the overlap in aim, method, and

¹⁰² Lieu, *Image and Reality*, 119.

¹⁰³ Lieu, *Image and Reality*, 280.

¹⁰⁴ Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 297.

¹⁰⁵ Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 271.

¹⁰⁶ Judith Lieu, “The Forging of Christian Identity and the *Letter to Diognetus*,” *Mediterranean Archaeology* II (1998): 71-82 (73).

¹⁰⁷ Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 293.

¹⁰⁸ Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 16.

conclusion in their work.¹⁰⁹ These authors investigate early Christian writings in order to understand how the texts function to demarcate Christian, Jewish, and pagan identity. Both authors agree that the boundaries and qualifiers of social identity are negotiable fabrications which the texts simultaneously introduce and reinforce.

The current project builds on the work of Boyarin and Lieu by applying their examination of identity construction to the writings that contain the false scripture argument. My work, however, applies their methodological inquiries to three texts not discussed by these authors, namely *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*, the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, and the *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies*. This dissertation intends to expand the discussions regarding the construction of identity and Jewish Christian relations to which Boyarin and Lieu have already contributed. A significant aspect of the present investigation is to discover how the false scripture argument was utilized as part of the process of generating and maintaining group identity. Such an endeavor is a crucial aspect in understanding an author's choice to group certain portions of scripture as either authentic or false. Yet, this approach, to my knowledge, has not been applied to these writings individually or as a group.

With the groundwork laid, I will conclude this introductory chapter by providing a blueprint for the remaining chapters. Each of the next three chapters focuses on one of the false scripture writings: *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*, the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, and the *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies*. These chapters follow a general pattern regarding presentation. Each chapter begins with by situating a text within a geographical region and a time period (as can best be known). cursory background information on each text is provided to provide context for the respective false scripture argument. This information will provide a basis for later suggestions on the identity of groups that may have served as competition for that of the author. Next, each chapter will present an analysis of the false scripture argument. I will note the markers of identity each author chooses to overtly maintain or reject and how these choices correspond to the categories of authentic or false scripture. Each text investigated here presents a

¹⁰⁹ However, the materials analyzed by each author does differ somewhat. Lieu focuses her studies on Christian texts in order to appreciate the rhetorical constructions of identity created by each author. Although Boyarin includes many of the same Christian works in his analysis, he also includes rabbinic sources. In addition, Boyarin's work is often more abstract in his aim at unveiling the process and procedure of identity construction while Lieu's work centers more on the texts themselves, allowing the ancient authors to explain their own concepts of moderns term identity.

fascinating argument about the existence of false portions of the scripture, not to mention the (often complicated) explanation of that claim. Finally, these chapters will conclude with a portrait of the identity presented by the text. Discussion will be given to the factors and motivations that may have helped shape that identity and, most importantly, the way the false scripture argument accomplishes the author's formation of social identity.

Chapter Two begins the analysis of the false scripture argument found within Ptolemy's Letter to Flora. The chapter opens with a discussion of the author's context as a Valentinian teacher in Rome in the mid- to late- second century. Since Ptolemy was a contemporary of Marcion, the connection between the Marcionite rejection of the Mosaic law and Ptolemy's tripartite division of that law is particularly interesting. The Christian identity formulated by Ptolemy appears to have been influenced by Marcion's radical approach to the scriptures.

Chapter Three examines the *Didascalia Apostolorum*. This third-century Syrian text presents itself as the written advice that resulted from the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15. The notion of *deuterosis*, or Second Legislation, is investigated in terms of its usage in Jewish contexts. I challenge the traditional understanding of this term as referring only to mishnah. Instead, I suggest the definition be expanded to reflect the false passages phenomenon in Christian writings. The *Didascalia* explains that the Second Legislation was instituted by God as a punishment upon the Israelites for committing idolatry at Sinai. Therefore, a significant portion of this chapter is devoted to understanding how the *Didascalist* describes the identity of Jews as well as Gentiles in his community.

Chapter Four engages the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*. Following a brief summary of the scholarly interest in the Pseudo-Clementines in general, this chapter focuses on the *Homilies* alone as the main location for the false passages argument. The *Homilist* explains that false passages have been inserted as a test to discern the faithful from the wicked. Scholarship on the Pseudo-Clementines has been frustrated by attempts to describe the identity espoused by these texts. Therefore, an important aspect of this portion of the dissertation is to explain how the false passages theory contributes to that larger endeavor. Once again, the influence of Marcionite beliefs plays a significant role in the development of the false passages theory.

The concluding chapter presents an analysis of the false scripture phenomenon by treating the texts as subset of early Christian writings. It includes summaries of each text for the purpose of briefly commenting on the possibility that the false scripture texts were somehow

influenced by authors of the others. These conclusions compare the common elements of that might be recognizable features of the phenomenon. In addition, the conclusion will discuss the ways in which this dissertation contributes to the topics of scriptural hermeneutics, the construction of identity, and early Jewish Christian relations. With this said, let us turn to *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*.

CHAPTER 2:

PTOLEMY'S LETTER TO FLORA AND THE TRIPARTITE DIVISION OF THE LAW

1. Introduction

Scholars have often overlooked *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*¹ when discussing the false scripture argument, preferring to focus on the Pseudo-Clementines or, to a lesser extent, the Didascalia. This chapter will demonstrate that Ptolemy's program of a tripartite division of the Mosaic law is one manifestation of the false scripture phenomenon and deserves a place alongside the other false scripture writings.

Ptolemy's Letter to Flora suggests that the Mosaic law contains false material; that is, some of the divine regulations were not actually instituted by god and, in essence, are contradictory to the authentic divine laws. According to Ptolemy, Moses and the Jewish elders are responsible for portions of the inauthentic passages. Additionally, inauthentic aspects of the Mosaic law were instituted by a demiurge figure. Ptolemy suggests that the teachings of Christ provide the means to discern which legislation is either true or false. Christ was sent on behalf of the perfect god both to abolish the false laws and fulfill the authentic ones. Ptolemy utilizes Christian writings like the Gospel of Matthew and Pauline letters to interpret the Jewish scriptures as well as explain the supposed 'true' nature of the Mosaic lawgivers. To fully analyze Ptolemy's notion of false scripture, this chapter will offer an exposition of these various elements of Ptolemy's paradigm of the role of Christ, the nature of the Mosaic law, and the lawgivers associated with it.

Furthermore, this chapter will argue that the false scripture argument presented in *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora* functions to construct one type of Christian identity. Ptolemy's characterization of portions of the Mosaic law as either purely divine (authentic) or established by the demiurge or humans (inauthentic) functions rhetorically either to preserve or invalidate various beliefs and practices familiar to Ptolemy's second-century community. These elements of religious life circumscribe Ptolemy's sense of what it means to be a follower of Christ the

¹ Although *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora* was likely written in the mid- to late second-century (see below), the text is only known from Epiphanius' *Panarion* 33.3.1 – 33.7.10, a work written around 375 CE.

Savior. In fact, it appears that Ptolemy's motivation for composing the letter was to counter erroneous notions about the Mosaic law espoused by other groups or individuals, most likely Christians, active alongside Ptolemy in Rome. Therefore, suggesting identities for Ptolemy's rhetorical foils is a critical part of my investigation of the *Letter's* idea of false scripture. Since Ptolemy has often been labeled as a Valentinian Gnostic, this investigation also hopes to join the ongoing discussion on whether these terms are appropriate or useful in describing social identity. My analysis of *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*, then, will focus on the details of the tripartite division of the Mosaic law in order to determine how the false scripture argument both contributes to and maintains social boundaries among the various Christian groups of second century Rome.

The chapter will begin with a discussion of Ptolemy's background in order to set the stage for any socio-historical analysis. The chapter will then offer an extensive explanation of Ptolemy's tripartite division of the Mosaic law. In light of this analysis, the chapter will conclude by mapping Ptolemy's sense of Christian identity in response to intra-Christian competition in second-century Rome.

2. Ptolemy: Biography and Influences

2.1. Ptolemy and Flora

Questions exist over the identities of Ptolemy (or Ptolemaeus) and Flora. Our author may be the Ptolemy who was reportedly executed for tempting a rich married woman to convert to Christianity.² If this is true, then it is possible that the rich married woman was Flora. According to Justin Martyr, this Ptolemy was martyred in 152. Scholars are divided, however, over whether these two Ptolemies are actually the same person.³ I am not convinced that these two figures are

² Justin Martyr, *2 Apology 2* (ANF 1:188-189).

³ Layton, Layton, Bentley. *The Gnostic Scriptures* (New York: Double Day and Co., Inc., 1987), 277-8. However, on page 307 Layton dates Ptolemy's work from 136-152, indicating that he accepts the idea that Justin Martyr is referring to the same Ptolemy of the letter. Ismo Dunderberg shares this view ("The School of Valentinus," in *A Companion to Second-Century Christian "Heretics"* [ed. Antti Marjanen and Petri Luomanen. Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae* 76; Leiden: Brill, 2005], 64-99. See 76-77 and n. 61) as does Adolf von Harnack (*Marcion*, 20). Christoph Marksches, who provides a helpful summary of scholarly opinions on the matter ("New Research on Ptolemaeus Gnosticus," *Zeitschrift fur antikes Christentum* 4 n. 2 (2000): 225-254. See especially 247-248), discounts the correlation between the two Ptolemys due to lack of evidence.

the same historical person. First of all, Ptolemy is a fairly common name at this time.⁴ Additionally, Justin does not describe any religious information about his Ptolemy. He does not mention that his Ptolemy was a teacher or had a following before being executed, nor is there any evidence from patristic sources (especially Irenaeus or Tertullian) that suggests the Ptolemy who authored the *Letter to Flora* was ever executed. It is difficult to believe that these authors would not have celebrated this information and used it to further their rhetorical attacks. Therefore, I doubt that Justin's Ptolemy is our author.

A consensus of scholars accepts the possibility that the Ptolemy who authored the *Letter to Flora* is the Ptolemy whom Irenaeus discusses in the first book of his *Against Heresies* and that Flora was a recent initiate. Furthermore, this Ptolemy is believed to have been a leader within the Valentinian school of Rome, perhaps due to Irenaeus' familiarity with Ptolemy and Valentinus.⁵ Irenaeus explains that Ptolemy is one of a few leaders who were followers of

⁴ Marksches claims there are at least 14 people known by this name ("New Research," 248, n.96).

⁵ Even though scholarship has continued to apply the label "Gnostic" to Ptolemy, many scholars have questioned the accuracy and, thus, the usefulness of these terms. More recent discussions of the problems associated with 'Gnosticism' and 'Gnostic' are found in Karen King's *What is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003) and Michael Williams' *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996). The categorical term 'Gnosticism' implies that some typology exists that is able to define a collective movement of Gnostics. The rejection of this term, however, is grounded in the observation that there was no such homogeneous movement in the ancient world. Gnosticism cannot be defined by any one typology but would need to include a range of possibilities – not all of which will be represented by any given 'Gnostic' text (on this point see especially King's *What is Gnosticism?*, 15-16). 'Gnosticism' as a homogeneous movement was not part of the vocabulary of the ancient authors. Furthermore, the deficiency of the term 'Gnosticism' is evident in the various and often conflicting explanations on the origin of the supposed movement. See Alistair Logan, *Gnostic Truth and Christian Heresy* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996); George MacRae, *Studies in the New Testament and Gnosticism* (Good News Studies 26. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1987); Robert Grant, *Gnosticism and Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959); PHEME PERKINS, *Gnosticism and the New Testament* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993); Birger Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990); Alan Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1977); Gilles Quispel, "Judaism, Judaic Christianity and Gnosis," in *The New Testament and Gnosis: Essays in Honour of Robert McLachlan Wilson* (ed. A.H.B. Logan and A.J.M. Wedderburn; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1983) 47-68. Many scholars now recognize that 'Gnosticism' is a modern taxonomical invention that is ultimately plagued with

Valentinus.⁶ Tertullian also corroborates, or perhaps copies from Irenaeus, this information.⁷ Given that Irenaeus was a contemporary of Ptolemy and Valentinus, his account provides the most relevant report of our author.⁸

Regarding the identity of Flora, the recipient of the letter, there is even less information. Scholars have offered a few hypotheses on her identity. Some claim that Flora was a proto-orthodox Christian who was curious about Ptolemy's teachings.⁹ R.M. Grant suggests that the name Flora is a symbol for Rome, though not all have accepted his claim.¹⁰ Dunderberg suggests

ambiguities and generalizations. Any definition of Gnosticism requires considerable qualification and discussion. The term 'Gnostic' has come under fire for similar reasons. The categorical nature of the term Gnostic was invented through the discourse of what was considered "orthodoxy" or "heresy" by ancient authors. Early Christian authors used this term as a means to gather together groups and individuals who were perceived as heretical – even though there are few if any definitive theological or social ties among them. In the end, the two terms mean whatever a modern writer wants them to mean. The subjectivity of these terms has rendered them unhelpful – especially when attempting to define identity, as is the aim of the present dissertation. Given these terminological obstacles, I will avoid the terms 'Gnostic' and 'Gnosticism' whenever possible in this project. When it occurs, I use the term Gnostic to describe any number of heterogeneous texts and ideas that define salvation in terms of esoteric knowledge.

⁶ Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* preface 2. Καὶ, καθὼς δύναμις ἡμῖν, τὴν τε γνῶμην αὐτῶν τῶν νῦν παραδιδασκόντων, λέγω δὴ τῶν περὶ Πτολεμαίου, ἀπάνθισμα οὖσαν τῆς Οὐαλεντίνου σχολῆς. "I intend, then, to the best of my ability, with knowledge of their teachings, I refer especially to those of Ptolemaeus, whose school may be described as a bud from that of Valentinus" (*ANF* 1:315-316).

⁷ Ptolemy is mentioned as a follower of Valentinus in *Ad Val.* 4 (*ANF* 3:505). Tertullian admits to using Irenaeus and others as sources for his account (*Ad Val.* 5; *ANF* 3:505-506).

⁸ As to whether we can trust the accuracy and objectivity of Irenaeus' account, Christoph Marksches has argued that this is too simple a question ("New Research," 226). Michael Williams' analysis of Ptolemy and Valentinus assumes the trustworthiness of Irenaeus (*Rethinking Gnosticism*, 14ff). On the other hand, Dunderberg argues that Irenaeus' account, which is dependent upon other sources, is more of an epitome than an objective informed description. He continues by claiming that the surviving Valentinian documents do not comply with Irenaeus' version of the school ("The School of Valentinus" 66, 70, 75).

⁹ Bart Ehrman. *Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 129.

¹⁰ Robert Grant, "Notes on Gnosis 1. Marcion and the Old Testament," *Vigiliae Christianae* 11 (1957): 147-151. For an argument against Grant's correlation of Flora with Rome, see Christoph

that Flora may have been Ptolemy's benefactor.¹¹ He notices that in the story of the woman being converted by the Ptolemy in Justin's *2 Apology*, the woman is torn over the issue of divorce. Eventually she ends her marriage. According to *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*, divorce is an inauthentic custom that does not originate with God but rather Moses. The patron relationship, then, suggests that Ptolemy teaches Flora since he is indebted to her. Dunderberg's hypothesis is not without merit even though there is no evidence to support his claim.

What is apparent from the text is that Ptolemy treats Flora as a new initiate who has received cursory knowledge about the origin of the cosmos but who does not have a detailed education about Ptolemy's conception of the Mosaic law and its lawgivers. Ptolemy is generous and open with his instruction to Flora. The information about the Mosaic lawgiver is considered esoteric knowledge reserved for the truly faithful of the apostolic line (*EpFlora* 33.3.8; 7.9).¹² Considering the importance Ptolemy places on apostolic transmission, it would seem odd for him to leak this information to someone not considered part of the community of the faithful.

2.2. Ptolemy and Valentinus

Irenaeus describes Valentinus as a Gnostic whose beliefs are shared by other Gnostics,¹³ presumably followers like Ptolemy. Apparently, Irenaeus writes his account against Valentinus and his followers because it was difficult to tell a Valentinian from another kind of Christian.¹⁴ Since the house churches in Rome were fairly open to alternate ideas and theologies at this

Markschies "New Research" 228 n. 17. I am not convinced by Grant's intriguing suggestion since Ptolemy's addressee is treated as an individual who seems to have recently converted; Ptolemy's letter functions didactically for Flora.

¹¹ Ismo Dunderberg, "Valentinian Teachers in Rome," in *Christians as a Religious Minority in a Multicultural City: Modes of Interaction and Identity Formation in Early Imperial Rome* (ed. Jurgen Zangenberg and Michael Labahn; T&T New York: Clark International, 2004), 157-174. See especially 163 n.48.

¹² Tertullian notes that Valentinians are known to keep their secretive material from new disciples until the initiates have somehow proven themselves (*Adv. Val* 1; *ANF* 3:503-504).

¹³ Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.11.1 (*ANF* 1:332).

¹⁴ Dunderberg, "Valentinian Teachers in Rome," 157.

time,¹⁵ Irenaeus and other polemicists like Justin and Tertullian felt a need to describe the identity of so-called “heretics” like Valentinus and his followers.¹⁶

Even so, it is likely that Irenaeus’ use of “the Valentinians” has two meanings: the contemporary opponents of Irenaeus and the larger collection of Valentinians who may comprise a type of “school.”¹⁷ Irenaeus’ statements concerning the inconsistent beliefs of Valentinians may be a result of this definitional confusion, use of incongruent sources, or, more likely, a polemical tactic of constructing an identity for his opponents.¹⁸ However, the recurring references to Ptolemy (1 pref., 1.8, 1.12.1) indicate Irenaeus’ interest in invalidating the Ptolemaic strain of Valentinian belief,¹⁹ perhaps as the ideal example of their beliefs which existed in Irenaeus’ setting.

Irenaeus offers an account of the Gnostic myth according to Ptolemy.²⁰ There are clear portions of Irenaeus’ writing that constitute an attack on the Valentinian religious system.²¹ Therefore, there is call for caution in blindly trusting all of Irenaeus’ account. However, since

¹⁵ Dunderberg, “Valentinian Teachers in Rome,” 166-169.

¹⁶ Justin Martyr’s *Dialogue with Trypho* 35 (ANF 1:212) and Tertullian’s *Against the Valentinians* (ANF 3:503-520) are devoted to attacking Valentinianism.

¹⁷ Einar Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the “Valentinians”* (Boston: Brill, 2006), 14-15.

¹⁸ Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 15-19. Thomassen also suggests that the notion of heterodoxy within Valentinian groups functions rhetorically as a mirror to his idea of a unified (and likely idealized) “orthodox” doctrine.

¹⁹ Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 18. Thomassen notes that since many Gnostic writings circulated anonymously it would be easy for Irenaeus to assume the cosmological doctrines he outlines in 1.1-8 originate with Ptolemy (*The Spiritual Seed*, 20-21).

²⁰ *Adv. Haer.* 1.1.1-1.8.5 (ANF 1:316-329). “These are the words of Ptolemy” (1.8.5). However, this sentence is lacking in the Greek “but are inserted in the old Latin version” (ANF 329 n.2). Tertullian (*Ad. Val.* 7; ANF 3:506-507) offers a similar version of the myth. Thomassen (*The Spiritual Seed*, 21) suggests that the material described in *Adv. Haer.* 1.1-8 may simply have been “circulated among a group of Valentinians who regarded themselves as followers of Ptolemy. But we know nothing for certain either about the author of the document or about the importance accorded to it by this group.”

²¹ See, for example, 1.4.3, 1.6.3, and 1.7.6.

scholarship is left with little material for comparison on Ptolemy's thought (the exception being *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*), Irenaeus can be of great value. His version of Ptolemy's brand of Valentinian teaching must therefore be privileged until clear evidence emerges to direct otherwise.

Valentinians believed their lineage to trace from Paul to Theudas and then Valentinus. Authority is important to Ptolemy, who is prone to placing himself within the lineage of apostolic tradition.²² As Layton writes, "While authors of classic gnostic scripture wrote their revelations as pseudepigraphy, attributed to venerated religious heroes of the past or to spiritual beings (Adam, Seth, the spiritual Seth, John the apostle, Barbelo), Valentinian teachers almost always spoke on the authority of their school tradition."²³

Although likely influenced by other theologies,²⁴ Irenaeus argues that the Valentinian school contained certain distinct features of cosmology.²⁵ According to Valentinian belief, the earthly realm was modeled on the more perfect heavenly realm which itself is an inferior version of the pleroma. Similarly, Valentinians categorize people into one of three categories: pneumatics, choics, and psychics.²⁶ The pneumatics are those who share some sense of substance with the realm of the pleroma, where they will eventually reside at the end time. The choics (sometimes called hylics) are those who live in error as part of the material system to which they

²² Ptolemy references apostolic authority in 33.3.8, 33.7.9, and perhaps even 33.7.10 if we understand Ptolemy's reference to "a concise account" to indicate a more expansive doctrine familiar to others.

²³ Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, 303. Dunderberg argues that there was a Valentinian school ("Valentinian Teachers in Rome," 158 and n.8). He also cites other scholars such as G. Lüdemann, B. Layton, and C. Marksches (in his later publications at least) who also share the belief that there actually was a Valentinian school. If there really was a Valentinian school, it should not be assumed that all of its members agreed with each other on every matter. King points out the importance of acknowledging that differing characteristics do not necessarily imply "a sociological break" (*What is Gnosticism?*, 33 n. 42). This point will be explored further in the following pages.

²⁴ See Werner Foerster, *Gnosis A Selection of Gnostic Texts. I. Patristic Evidence* (trans. R. McL. Wilson; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 122, n. 9.

²⁵ Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, 1.1.1 – 1.8.5 (ANF 1:316-329); Tertullian *Ad. Val.* 7 (ANF 3:506-507).

²⁶ Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, 1.7.5 (ANF 1:326).

are bound. Between these two types of people are the psychics who are able to gain a lesser type of salvation, one outside the pleroma with the demiurge, if they make the right choices. Thus, the Valentinian system is based on the dichotomy between knowledge and ignorance – an underlying opposition clearly found within *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*.²⁷ The notion of false scripture in *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora* is a kind of shibboleth for Ptolemy's community. Those Christians who are able to know the truth about the law are able to properly navigate past the false scripture and inauthentic ceremonies rooted in the Jewish scriptures.

Valentinians do not emphasize the Eden myth or the role of the devil as the nemesis of the faithful. Instead, the world is not an evil place but a reflection of the just god who created it.²⁸ Valentinian texts such as the *Apocalypse of John* and the *Apocalypse of Adam* illustrate the lack of negative attention attributed to the devil.²⁹ In addition, the Valentinians taught a doctrine of syzygies, or couples, which claims that all entities have a companion. Together, the companions function as perfect complements to each other, typically as male and female.³⁰

Scholars are divided over how much of the theology found in *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora* is derived from Ptolemy's teacher Valentinus and how much is his own innovation.³¹ Even scholars who surmise that Ptolemy adapted the views of his teacher³² admit that it is difficult to prove such a hypothesis since there is no scholarly consensus on what exactly constitutes Valentinian theology.³³ Even if Irenaeus' account is accepted as objective information, scholars still note that

²⁷ Foerster, *Gnosis*, 126.

²⁸ Foerster, 155.

²⁹ Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, 306.

³⁰ Foerster, *Gnosis*, 123. The doctrine of the syzygies will play an important part of the analysis of the Pseudo-Clementines' notion of false passages (see chapter four).

³¹ For a thorough examination of the Valentinian school and the relevant scholarship see Anne Marie McGuire's *Valentinus and the Gnostike Hairesis: An Investigation of Valentinus' Position in the History of Gnosticism?* (Ph.D. dissertation. Yale University, 1983).

³² See I. Dunderberg's "Valentinian Teachers in Rome," 166ff. for example.

³³ It is even difficult to determine if any writings are authentic to Valentinus or whether they are simply Valentinian, that is, being authored by Valentinus' students (King, *What is Gnosticism?*, 154-156). Tertullian (*Ad. Val.* 4, 33-34, 38; *ANF* 3:505, 519, 520) explains that Valentinian

there are simply not enough sources to determine the boundaries of either teacher's system.³⁴ Admittedly, providing an overview of Valentinian theology is not the purpose of *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*. Therefore, we should not expect to find an overwhelming number of connections between the two teachers' ideas – especially considering the brevity of Ptolemy's text. Moreover, the ideas of other Christians of Ptolemy's time likely influenced him. If true, then this explanation would account for the 'lack' of Valentinian material in Ptolemy's short work. At the same time, Ptolemy probably developed his own ideas which could also account for any divergences in theology.

My analysis suggests that Ptolemy's use of the tripartite division of the Mosaic law is unique among Valentinian texts. There is no indication that other Valentinian writings presented such a model. "Si l'école de Ptolémée affirme que toute la Bible contient des interpolations humaines, il faut reconnaître que ce point de vue ne se retrouve pas ailleurs."³⁵ I concur with Quispel that Ptolemy's schematic of a tripartite division of the law is a unique aspect of his theological system and a novel supplement to the cosmological system of his teacher. Yet Quispel shows little interest in how Ptolemy's notion of false scripture functions rhetorically within his letter to construct an identity apart from others who may have been aware of similar problematic verses. Ptolemy was not the only second-century author to realize contradictions within the Mosaic law. It is possible that Marcion's more famous hermeneutic influenced Ptolemy's paradigm.

students profess beliefs that are drastically different from those of their supposed founder – whether Valentinus or Ptolemy.

³⁴ Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, 276.

³⁵ Quispel, *La Lettre*, 86: "If the school of Ptolemy affirms that all of the Bible contains human interpretations, it is necessary to recognize that this point of view is not found elsewhere". Although I agree with his statement, I am confused as to why Quispel would make it. Quispel's claim is interesting since it undermines his overall point in illustrating how all of Ptolemy's notions can be traced to other "catholic" authors (70, 101) as well as a previous statement on an earlier page where he claims that the recognition of contradictory passages in the scriptures must have been part of the secretive teaching of the Valentinians (84). He does point out that Marcion, too, rejected the Jewish scriptures as inauthentic. However, Marcion's reasoning was that the Mosaic lawgiver was a petty and inferior deity, not because there were three lawgivers as Ptolemy claims.

2.3. Ptolemy and Marcion

Since there are no other literary references to this particular tripartite division of the Mosaic law, Ptolemy should be credited as the first to record such an idea.³⁶ Even so, I suggest that Ptolemy's paradigm of the law was influenced by Marcion. Since most scholars agree that Ptolemy lived in Rome in the mid- to late second century, it is very probable that Ptolemy would have had some familiarity with Marcion and his radical style of biblical criticism.³⁷ Irenaeus claims that Valentinus (and likely his followers, such as Ptolemy) was active in Rome at the same time as Marcion and his followers.³⁸ Harnack goes so far as to argue that Ptolemy was dependent on Marcion's ideas of a just creator god.³⁹ Furthermore, Ptolemy likely knew of the controversy surrounding Marcion's ousting from the church in Rome and the social disturbance that must have ensued.

Ptolemy's motivation for writing his letter may have been to question the authenticity of (portions of) the Mosaic law, as Marcion did, while at the same time to demonstrate the validity of the Valentinian model. My intention is to demonstrate that Ptolemy's notion of inauthentic portions of scripture is, at least in part, an attempt to appropriate Marcion's hermeneutic. Ptolemy presents a new version of Marcion's observations regarding contradictions among the Jewish scriptures that salvages certain 'authentic' elements of the Mosaic law that had been targeted by Marcion. While Marcion described the Jewish law as the 'inferior' teachings of a

³⁶ Although the authors of Galatians 3:19 and Acts 7:35 refer to mediators delivering the law, their explanations differ since they do not claim the mediators are responsible for the establishment of the law. Instead, they are presented as messengers rather than lawgivers. Furthermore, even as we begin to consider Ptolemy's appropriation of Marcion's notion of antitheses, it is important to remember that Marcion's division of true and false law has two sources (God the Father and the creator) instead of Ptolemy's three lawgivers.

³⁷ Whether one accepts the proposition that our author is the same Ptolemy mentioned by Justin Martyr or instead argues there were (at least) two contemporary figures by the same name (see discussion above), the slight difference in dating is not enough to eclipse the historical reality that Ptolemy would have had contact with either Marcion or his followers in late second century Rome. See Harnack, *Marcion*, 20, 76 n. 26.

³⁸ *Adv. Haer.* 3.4.3 (ANF 1:417).

³⁹ *Marcion* 76 n.26, 123 n.1.

demiurge, Ptolemy understood the Mosaic law as pure law that had become intertwined with false legislation.⁴⁰ In doing so, Ptolemy offers the first version of the false scripture argument.

I do not claim that Marcion is the origin of all future discussions of false scripture, or even those within the first four centuries. On the other hand, it is naïve to suggest that Marcion had nothing to do with the development of at least a few of the writings presently under investigation in this project.⁴¹ This kind of close reading of the biblical texts was nothing new.⁴² As far as can be determined, Ptolemy does not use the language of Marcion in his own explanation. Instead, I argue that Ptolemy is simply familiar with Marcion's methodological approach but not necessarily with a written version of that approach. Besides *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*, there are no other Christian writings, to my knowledge, which attempt to explain the discrepancies between the teachings of the Jewish scriptures and the Christian scriptures, account for these difficulties by means of the argument of false scripture, and are earlier than or contemporaries of Marcion.

Ancient authors clearly report about the life and teachings of Marcion,⁴³ especially his

⁴⁰ Marcion claimed two types of material exist in the scriptures: the true words of God and the inferior passages derived from a counterfeit deity. Marcion's dualistic categorization of scripture may have been the first endeavor designed to construct a sense of religious identity for a social group by explaining what is accepted as authentic scripture from those rejected portions which are considered false. Yet, he is distinct from the other texts discussed in this dissertation by labeling the Jewish scriptures as entirely false whereas the three texts investigated in this dissertation discuss how false material has been intertwined alongside authentic portions.

⁴¹ However, Harnack does argue that Ptolemy was dependent upon Marcion's ideas, especially that the creator was just but not evil (*Marcion*, 76 n.26, 123 n.1). Yet, this idea is also found within the teachings of Valentinus as explained by Irenaeus (see discussion above).

⁴² Authors earlier than Marcion observed passages difficult to explain or correlate with others found in the developing canon. Many of the writings now grouped as Jewish Pseudepigrapha contain stories or theologies tangential to narratives now found in the canon. These unknown authors invented ways to fill in the gaps found within the flow of the biblical narratives in order to supply a more complete reading of the texts. This is the very nature of Jewish midrash which was being written while Marcion was teaching his own ideas on how to deal with similar evaluations of the scriptures.

⁴³ Marcion's works did not survive. However, the seminal work by A. von Harnack contains the commonly cited reconstruction of Marcion's ideas. For more recent evaluations of Harnack's work see the essays collected in Gerhard May and Katharina Greschat's *Marcion und seine kirchengeschichtliche Wirkung (Marcion and His Impact on Church History): Vorträge der*

attack on the Jewish scriptures.⁴⁴ Having either been born into a Christian household or converted to the Christian faith,⁴⁵ Marcion had accepted the idea that Jesus Christ was a representative of the divine. He was also familiar with the Jewish scriptures. However, after investigating the Jewish scriptures and comparing them with the writings about Jesus and Paul's letters, Marcion found that the statements made by and about Christ sometimes conflicted with the material found in the Jewish scriptures. Because the scriptures were often at odds with the teachings of Christ, the two literary collections could no longer be understood as complementary. From these observations Marcion concluded that the divine lawgiver of the Jewish scriptures could not be the same one represented by the words of Christ.⁴⁶ His analysis prompted the suggestion that there must be two gods represented in the scriptures: the Creator god of the Jewish scriptures, who is responsible for the created order and the Mosaic laws, and God the Father who sent his son Christ into the world. Marcion argued that this hierarchy must exist in this particular model since God the Father would characterize the higher ideals of mercy, righteousness, and goodness while the Creator must be lower in order on account of his malevolent inclinations like jealousy, anger, and the pettiness seen in his incessant testing of the Israelite patriarchs.

Irenaeus describes Marcion as one who “mutilates” the Gospel of Luke and Pauline epistles while attacking the law and prophets.⁴⁷ Marcion claimed that false material does exist; however, he located it within the gospels and the Pauline epistles. Marcion suggests that the

Internationalen Fachkonferenz zu Marcion, gehalten vom 15.-18. August in Mainz (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2002).

⁴⁴ Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Epiphanius, and Ephrem all attest to the ‘heretical’ ideas of Marcion and his later followers regarding the Jewish scriptures.

⁴⁵ Harnack argues that Marcion was a Jew from a Jewish family since it would explain his knowledge of the Jewish scriptures (*Marcion*, 15-16).

⁴⁶ Tertullian, *Adv. Marcion* I.19 (*ANF* 3:285); IV 6 (*ANF* 3:351). Harnack, *Marcion*, 75-77.

⁴⁷ *Adv. Haer.* 1.27.2-4 (*ANF* 1:352). Interestingly, Irenaeus describes Marcion as “the only one who has dared openly to mutilate the Scriptures” (1.27.4; *ANF* 1:352). It is curious why Ptolemy is not grouped with Marcion regarding this issue. Perhaps Irenaeus was aware of Ptolemy but not familiar with Ptolemy's exposition on the Mosaic law as found in the *Letter to Flora*.

twelve disciples and the Jerusalem church inserted propaganda.⁴⁸ For this reason, Marcion offered what he believed to be the ‘true’ account of Christ’s teachings from edited versions of the Gospel of Luke and the Pauline epistles.⁴⁹ Marcion’s method of discerning true from false passages relied on observing contradictions between the Mosaic law and the gospel.⁵⁰ This approach is also the basis of Ptolemy’s tripartite division of the Mosaic law.

Some of the examples of Marcion’s argument are relevant to Ptolemy’s letter. First, it seems that Marcion claimed that Paul’s decision to repeal aspects of the Mosaic law was based on his realization that the laws in question were instituted by a secondary deity.⁵¹ That the Mosaic law is not derived from the perfect god of the pleroma is a key matter in Ptolemy’s exposition. Second, Marcion argued for the abolishment of the *lex talionis* on the grounds that this practice contradicts the provision against violence in the Decalogue.⁵² The same issue is presented in Ptolemy’s discussion of god’s law and how Christ’s arrival was, in part, to abolish the *lex talionis*. The final example is that Marcion was against maintaining the Sabbath since Christ did not adhere to this practice.⁵³ Once again, the Sabbath emerges within *Ptolemy’s Letter to Flora* as one of a handful of religious practices that have been re-examined after Christ’s arrival. In fact, both authors rely on the Gospel of Matthew’s statement that Christ arrived not to abolish the law but to fulfill it (Matt 5:17).⁵⁴ The interpretation of the Matthean Jesus’ statement indicates that he preserves only the ‘authentic’ law; false law was to be repealed or abolished.

Considering the similar hermeneutical approaches of Ptolemy and Marcion, I suggest that the similarities between *Ptolemy’s Letter* and Marcion’s views are an attempt at appropriation by

⁴⁸ Tertullian, *Adv. Marcion* IV 3, 13, 21, 22, 26, 39 (ANF 3:348, 354-355, 380-385, 397-399). Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 3.2.2; 3.12.12 (ANF 1:415, 434).

⁴⁹ Tertullian, *Adv. Marcion* I 20 (ANF 3:285); IV 2, 4 (ANF 3:347-348, 349-351); Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 3.14.3 (ANF 1:438-439). See also Harnack, *Marcion*, 31-43 for Marcion’s reconstructions of these texts.

⁵⁰ Tertullian, *Adv. Marcion*, I 19 (ANF 3:284-285).

⁵¹ Tertullian, *Adv. Marcion*, I 21 (ANF 3:286).

⁵² Tertullian, *Adv. Marcion*, II 18, 28 (ANF 3:311, 319-320).

⁵³ Tertullian, *Adv. Marcion*, II 21 (ANF 3:313-314); IV 12 (ANF 3:362-364).

⁵⁴ Tertullian, *Adv. Marcion*, IV 12 (ANF 3:362-364).

the Valentinian teacher. As noted above, Ptolemy's presentation of a tripartite division of the law into authentic and inauthentic portions is novel among Valentinian writings. Ptolemy's introduction of this notion is a result of his familiarity with the biblical criticism of Marcion. Ptolemy's construction of Christian identity is born out of theological conflict with other Christian teachers.⁵⁵ *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora* represents one author's unique configuration of Christian identity that took shape within an atmosphere of competing interpretations of the Jewish customs and scriptures. For Ptolemy, a critical aspect of being a true Christian was the proper discernment of the true law given by God from the inferior laws established by other sources. Ptolemy's unique hermeneutical approach to the Mosaic law distinguishes him from his fellow Valentinians while at the same time incorporating a version of the biblical criticism espoused by Marcion.

Daniel Boyarin observes that the construction of identity happens on the borders where two or more social groups come into close contact.⁵⁶ In an attempt to distinguish themselves from 'others,' a rhetoric of some sort is invented to elucidate what makes 'us' different from 'them'. Marcion functions as one of the 'others' whom Ptolemy uses as a straw man in his writings. As will be seen in the discussion below, Ptolemy presents an argument that clearly distinguishes his 'true' knowledge about the law from those who follow mistaken beliefs – in particular the opening section which is preoccupied with targeting those who are ignorant of the truth. The following exposition of Ptolemy's views on the relationship between the Mosaic law and the false scripture will lead directly to a clearer portrait of Ptolemy's sense of Christian identity.

3. The Nature of the Law and the Three Lawgivers

Ptolemy's Letter to Flora is a short work devoted to the issue of the tripartite division of the Mosaic law and the three lawgivers supposedly responsible for its establishment. As mentioned earlier, this topic is unique to Ptolemy and not found even among other Valentinian

⁵⁵ Marksches ("New Research," 237) also argues that Ptolemy demonstrates an anti-Marcionite attitude in his writing.

⁵⁶ Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 10-14.

writings.⁵⁷ As an instructional correspondence to a new initiate, this document provides modern readers with an opportunity to review the ideology and hermeneutical style of one of the central Valentinian teachers. Ptolemy succinctly outlines his methodology:⁵⁸

Περιλείπεται δὲ ἡμῖν ἀξιωθεῖσι γε τῆς ἀμφοτέρων τούτων γνώσεως ἐκφῆναί σοι καὶ ἀκριβῶσαι αὐτόν τε τὸν νόμον, ποταπὸς τις εἴη, καὶ τὸν ὑφ' οὗ τέθειται, τὸν νομοθέτην, τῶν ῥηθησομένων ἡμῖν τὰς ἀποδείξεις ἐκ τῶν τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν λόγων παριστῶντες, δι' ὧν μόνον ἔστιν ἀπταίστως ἐπὶ τὴν κατάληψιν τῶν ὄντων ὀδηγεῖσθαι.⁵⁹ (*PtFlora* 33.3.8)

Ptolemy's catechetical letter reveals how to be a faithful follower of Christ, a key element of his proposed identity. His letter is designed to provide one stage of successive instruction to Flora⁶⁰ by revealing the advanced material of his Valentinian school. Such information has not been revealed or understood by Christians who do not follow Ptolemy's teaching and who are portrayed as ignorant of the true nature of things. In his letter, Ptolemy wastes no time in delineating the incorrect beliefs these 'others' uphold regarding the Mosaic law in his overarching purpose of explaining the 'truth' about the Jewish statutes and traditions.

⁵⁷ Markschies, "New Research," 237, 239.

⁵⁸ All translations of *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora* are taken (with some adaptations) from Bentley Layton's *The Gnostic Scriptures* (New York: Double Day and Co., Inc., 1987).

⁵⁹ "It remains for us, who have been deemed worthy of <acquaintance> with both, to show you (sing.) exactly the sort of law it is, and the legislator who established it. We shall offer proofs of what will be said by drawing from our savior's words, by which alone it is possible to reach a certain apprehension of the reality of the matter without stumbling." This passage is strikingly similar to the hermeneutical approach of the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* (see especially *Hom.* 3.50.2-3) since both texts (1) claim that the narrator/author has received special knowledge (2) regarding the true and false nature of the Jewish scriptures (3) which can be recognized only by the words of Christ.

⁶⁰ Ptolemy begins his letter by outlining the nature of the problem to Flora (*PtFlora* 33.3.8). After his full exposition, which constitutes one stage of his teaching, his conclusion indicates that Flora will next learn about the origin of the first principle and the other gods (*PtFlora* 33.7.9).

3.1. Those Who Misunderstand the Law

The letter begins⁶¹ by questioning the knowledge of those who have read and seemingly understood the Mosaic law. Ptolemy challenges the claims of other groups who believe they understand the commandments of the lawgiver (*PtFlora* 33.3.1). According to Ptolemy, this anonymous group of people can be further subdivided into two groups: those who believe the law was established by the perfect god and those who believe that it was established by the devil. Dissatisfied with these explanations of the law, Ptolemy argues that both groups are wrong. He subsequently offers his own analysis of law and the lawgivers.

There is a large degree of agreement on the identification of the two groups to which Ptolemy assigns these positions. The vast majority of interpreters ascribe the first position to the so-called Christian ‘mainstream theology’ of the city of Rome. Some identify it as the position of the ‘Catholics’ within the framework of the dualism between Catholics and Gnostics suggested by Quispel. The second position is often ascribed to Marcion’s followers. But Ptolemy certainly simplifies both positions for didactic reasons here. He gives an ideal-type reconstruction of two positions which were, from his point of view, equally absurd.⁶²

The proper identification of these two parties is critical in the overarching discussion of how Ptolemy constructs his boundaries of group identity. Ptolemy often refers to figures of authority, such as Moses, the elders, Christ, the apostles, and Paul. Even so, Ptolemy does not describe these characters as Christian or Jewish. Jewish and Christian groups challenged each other’s authority and validity by claiming these celebrated characters as part of their respective traditions. The place of Ptolemy’s faction in the social order emerges out of theological competition. In the remainder of this chapter I intend to argue that Ptolemy writes his letter in response to other Christian groups. Ptolemy discusses the existence of these so-called mistaken groups early in his letter in order to eventually establish why his knowledge is superior to theirs.

We should also remain aware that although Ptolemy categorizes those who uphold the incorrect beliefs as one of two camps, it is very possible that the theological views he discusses

⁶¹ Whether or not Epiphanius’ *Pan.* 33.3.1 is the original start of the letter seems impossible to know for certain. Since Epiphanius is the only author to preserve any portion of the text, other textual comparisons are not possible.

⁶² Summarized in Markschies, “New Research,” 233-4.

represent numerous manifestations of contemporary religious life.⁶³ Part of the goal of this chapter is to offer a clearer direction in ascertaining Ptolemy's social competitors. However, to accept his dichotomous explanation of the contemporary religious landscape is to naïvely accept the rhetoric of his letter.

3.1.1. The law is not established by the perfect god

Ptolemy categorizes the first group as those who argue that the law has been ordained by god the father (*PtFlora* 33.3.4). Ptolemy's view is based on his assumption that the law must have the same character as its provider. Since the perfect being is good, its law must also be perfect and good (*PtFlora* 33.7.5). Ptolemy refers to the goodness of this god by citing Jesus' statement from Matt 19:17, "there is one only who is good." In addition, the essence of the perfect god is characterized as incorruptible (ἀφθαρσιπῶ) and simple (ἀπλοῦν) (*PtFlora* 33.7.7). According to Ptolemy's paradigm, these characteristics are not appropriate labels for the Mosaic law, as will be explained below. Furthermore, Ptolemy argues that the law required completion by another being – Christ. Therefore, this perfect god could not have established the law since the law itself is not perfect (*PtFlora* 33.3.4).

The exact identification of this first group is difficult to pin down because of Ptolemy's over generalized description. Quispel and Layton claim that this group is made up of Jews and Christians,⁶⁴ a position established earlier by Harnack.⁶⁵ It is difficult to determine if constituents of this group were even monotheists since Ptolemy describes the deity as "the perfect god and father." This qualification could indicate that his targets are 'Gnostics' or even polytheists who believe the law has been delivered not by the numerous other celestial forces but by the high (perfect) god. Even so, I am inclined to consider that Ptolemy here really does refer to monotheists, of some variety of Jews and/or Christians. The reason for this decision is that Ptolemy's grouping has a binary structure; each group represents one side of a polarized system. The letter assumes that those who are not properly initiated into the Valentinian tripartite view of

⁶³ Although I will employ these terms anachronistically in the hope of suggesting a more specific analysis, I admit that these categories are umbrella terms themselves.

⁶⁴ Quispel, *La Lettre*, 78; Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, 306.

⁶⁵ Helpfully summarized in Marckschies, "New Research," 233.

the cosmos would be aware of only two possible lawgivers: God the Father or the devil. On the other hand, Ptolemy's letter includes four central supernatural characters: God the Father, the Devil, the demiurge, and Christ.⁶⁶ The two possible sources of the law acknowledged within the other erroneous systems (i.e., the perfect god and the devil) do not seem to consider the possibility that a demiurge might have provided the law. Without excluding other possibilities, I agree with Quispel and Layton who consider it more likely that the group that attributes the law to God the Father is composed of monotheistic Jews and Christians.

3.1.2. The law is not established by the devil

The second category of people involves those who argue that the devil is responsible for the law as well as the world. They consider the devil to be “the father and maker of the universe”⁶⁷ (*PtFlora* 33.3.2). This group is mistaken in its beliefs for reasons similar to those of the first group – the law must reflect the character of the lawgiver. Τοῦ μὲν γὰρ ἀντικειμένου ἔστιν ἡ οὐσία φθορά τε καὶ σκότος (ὕλικὸς γὰρ οὗτος καὶ πολυσχιδής) (*PtFlora* 33.7.7).⁶⁸ Any law established by the devil would be inherently evil and wicked (*PtFlora* 33.7.5). The Mosaic law seeks to abolish the very type of injustice embodied in the work of the devil. To consider the devil to be the lawgiver is evidence of a person's false logic and misunderstanding (*PtFlora* 33.3.5).

The nature of the misunderstanding can be verified by Jesus' words that a house divided against itself will not be able to stand (*PtFlora* 33.3.5 referring to Matt 12:25; Mark 3:25; Luke 11:17-18). The idea that the devil would establish laws against himself and teach these laws to others is absurd to Ptolemy. He also introduces more evidence from the gospel accounts to illustrate his point. According to the Gospel of John, the world was created by and through a craftsman (John 1:3). The lawgiver might not be God the Father but it cannot be the devil. Those who make this argument are considered spiritually blind according to Ptolemy (*PtFlora* 33.3.6);

⁶⁶ Although the Valentinian cosmological system does include a number of other characters, most importantly Sophia (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, 1.2-3; *ANF* 1:316-317).

⁶⁷ πατέρα καὶ ποιητὴν τοῦτον λέγοντες εἶναι τοῦδε τοῦ παντός. See also Plato, *Timaeus*, 28e.

⁶⁸ “For the essence of the adversary is both corruption and darkness, for the adversary is material and divided into many parts.”

they have not understood the purpose of Christ's arrival on earth as the distinction between the authentic and false portions of the law of god.

Clearly the constituents of the second group described by Ptolemy consider the divine lawgiver to be an evil being, leading them to reject the Mosaic law. Given that Ptolemy writes in the latter half of the second century in Rome, it is possible to identify this group as Marcionites.⁶⁹ However, this suggestion seems unlikely. Marcion understood the evil devil as existing alongside the just creator.⁷⁰ According to Harnack's analysis, Marcion did not believe the demiurge was responsible for making matter evil but only for moral evil; matter became evil from its association with the devil.⁷¹ Also, Marcion argued that the creator was just – a title not attributed to the devil who is utterly evil. The creator may sometimes be malicious, but he is not evil.⁷² It is possible that later followers of Marcion altered this aspect of his theology⁷³ but without direct evidence it seems more fruitful to look elsewhere for an identity to Ptolemy's

⁶⁹ A position held by Quispel (see *La Lettre* 79) and others as summarized by Marksches ("New Research," 233).

⁷⁰ However, a recent critique of Harnack's theories about Marcionite theology by Winrich Löhr argues that, according to polemical authors like Ireanaeus, Tertullian, Origen, and Hippolytus, Marcion's demiurge figure does not characterize the type of justice that Marcion approves of elsewhere (Löhr, "Did Marcion distinguish between a just god and a good god?" in *Marcion und seine kirchengeschichtliche Wirkung (Marcion and His Impact on Church History): Vorträge der Internationalen Fachkonferenz zu Marcion, gehalten vom 15.-18 August in Mainz.* (ed. Gerhard May and Katharina Greschat; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2002), 131-147. In addition, it does not appear that Marcion distinguished between a good and just god but instead a good god and other forces that were less than good; this distinction was, according to Löhr, either a result of Marcion's later followers or a fabrication by heresiologists to justify their attacks on Marcion (144-45).

⁷¹ Harnack, *Marcion*, 68.

⁷² Harnack, *Marcion*, 68-69. Ephrem (*Hymni contra Haereses* 48) describes Marcion's account of the cosmos, specifically that the creator collaborated with the devil on such projects as the creation of the world and humanity. The creator contributed the soul while the devil offered the evil matter to surround it.

⁷³ Harnack, *Marcion*, 68, 104ff. Löhr, "Did Marcion Distinguish," 144.

second group. In the Valentinian system, there is little room for the devil since all matter was created by the demiurge; there is no central function to the figure of the devil.⁷⁴

Yet other groups, such as the Sethians, did perceive the lawgiver as a negative entity. Ptolemy may have had them in mind when he penned this description. The Valentinian myth portrays the creator deity in a positive light whereas the Sethians depict the creator as a malevolent force due to his spiritual inferiority.⁷⁵ This difference could account for Ptolemy's second group. Further analysis may buttress this claim.

In her book, *What is Gnosticism?*, Karen King offers a useful summary of the differences between Valentinian and Sethian beliefs.⁷⁶ Besides noting the differing perception of the creator in each system, as mentioned above, King also argues that the Valentinian myth is "more Christian" than its Sethian counterpart since the former has a single savior while the latter has multiple ones, including female figures. The Valentinians are more analogous to other forms of Christianity regarding the notion of the deity found in Genesis.⁷⁷ In addition, King states of the latter that the Valentinian cosmological myth is less antagonistic than the Sethian one (see the *Apocryphon of John*). Sethians depict humans engaged in a battle with internal and external forces (worldly desires, Fate, death, etc.) that attempt to imprison the human spirit, which is a reflection of the divine. On the other hand, Valentinians understand humanity's central obstacle

⁷⁴ Foerster, *Gnosis*, 153. See King's discussion summarized below.

⁷⁵ The Sethian *Apocryphon of John* includes a creation myth that portrays the demiurge figure, Yaldabaoth, as an evil being who, out of jealousy towards Adam, designs the world as a malevolent place.

⁷⁶ King, *What is Gnosticism?*, 156-162. Yet, she does point out that both groups demonstrate a considerable level of internal diversity which will likely complicate such a generalized comparison (157); "the real situation was certainly much more complex" (159).

⁷⁷ The observation that Ptolemy's teaching, part of the Valentinian school, is more in line with "catholic Christianity" than it is with other Gnostics of the time is the central argument of G. Quispel's commentary on *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*. I have altered the language Quispel generally employs to simply Christians after reflecting on Markschie's comments against Quispel's overarching assumptions about *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora* (found throughout his article, "New Research"). Markschie's correctly points out that Quispel's dichotomous distinction between Gnostic and catholic Christians is outdated given the significant contribution made by Walter Bauer regarding the diversity present within early Christianity (Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*).

to be ignorance of the true nature of the universe – namely, as a place that is not reality but an inferior reflection of the pleroma. The varying interpretations of the crucifixion illustrate the different theologies: Sethians perceive Christ’s death as an overt result of the ongoing cosmic battle, while Valentinians perceive it to be a public revelation of the Son’s knowledge of the Father. Sethians also believe that there are only two types of people: those who will be saved and those who will not. Valentinians recognize three types of people: the spirituals (i.e. Valentinians) who will advance into the pleroma, the psychics who, along with the demiurge, will rise into the heavens above the earth but below the pleroma, and finally the hylics who will be destroyed with all other matter. Despite these differences, even King acknowledges the similarity between the two groups. It is perhaps in the spirit of discernment and differentiation of social groups that Ptolemy targets the Sethians. The community’s identity, then, is constructed as something apart from Sethian beliefs.

By constructing the identity of his own group as those who know the ‘true’ nature of things, Ptolemy simultaneously describes the other group(s) as those who are in the wrong. In this way, Ptolemy circumscribes the identity of his own followers as those whose knowledge is superior to others. Although the Valentinian cosmological myth is not referenced within *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*, there are theological echoes. The myth describes how Valentinians (the pneumatics) possess superior knowledge that will provide true salvation in the pleroma. Other Christians are left with a lesser type of salvation with the demiurge in the intermediate area.⁷⁸ Ptolemy’s claim that other groups (non-Valentinians) fail to adequately understand the true nature of the Mosaic law might be a result of Ptolemy’s Valentinian training. Possibly reflecting the Valentinian myth, Ptolemy recognizes that these other Christians (and perhaps Jews) attempt to follow and understand the law. Unfortunately, according to Ptolemy, they are unable to realize the ‘truth’ about the Mosaic law and its lawgivers. Thus, it is probable that the teachings of Valentinus influenced Ptolemy’s own message.

Ptolemy concludes this discussion by stating that both of these groups, those who believe that the law originates from the perfect god and the others who claim its origin with the devil, miss the truth – each in its own way (*PtFlora* 33.3.2-3, 7). Members of these groups are unfamiliar with the actual high god while completely ignorant of the true role of the devil. As he

⁷⁸ Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.7.1-5 (ANF 1:325-326). Tertullian, *Ad. Val.* 29 (ANF 3:517).

concludes the introduction of his letter, Ptolemy informs Flora that he will demonstrate (1) what kind of law makes up the Mosaic law and (2) the identity of the lawgiver. These points will be supported by the words of the Savior “by which alone it is possible to reach a certain apprehension of the reality of the matter without stumbling”⁷⁹ (*PtFlora* 33.3.8).

3.1.3. *The nature of the lawgiver revealed*

According to Ptolemy, the true nature of the Mosaic law has been regularly misunderstood since the actual lawgiver has not been accurately identified. Knowledge of the law is intimately tied to knowledge about the lawgiver(s) (*PtFlora* 33.7.2). Therefore, any investigation of Ptolemy’s paradigm about the tripartite division of the law must begin with a summary of Ptolemy’s description of the lawgiving creator god.

As seen in the above discussion, Ptolemy’s text is directed against groups who mistakenly believe in one of two errors: either the law was established by the perfect god or it was instituted by the devil. The law is not perfect so it cannot be derived from the perfect god, nor is it unjust as if provided by the devil (*PtFlora* 33.3.4-5). Therefore, a third force must exist, one who is distinct from both the perfect god and the devil (*PtFlora* 33.7.3). Ptolemy identifies this being as the divine craftsman and then offers a more complete explanation about the nature of this lawgiver (*PtFlora* 33.7.2).

The actual lawgiver, then, is the divine craftsman and maker (δημιουργὸς καὶ ποιητῆς) who has created the world and the things it contains. He is of a different essence (οὐσίᾳς) than the other two, one that lies “in the middle” of them (*PtFlora* 33.7.4).⁸⁰ He is inferior to the perfect god because only the latter is unengendered (ἀγέννητος).⁸¹ At the same time, Ptolemy

⁷⁹ τὰς ἀποδείξεις ἐκ τῶν τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν λόγων παριστῶντες, δι’ ὧν μόνον ἔστιν ἀπταιστώσως ἐπὶ τὴν κατάληψιν τῶν ὄντων ὀδηγεῖσθαι.

⁸⁰ Thomassen suggests (*The Spiritual Seed*, 120-121) that the usage of the term middle (ἡ μέσος of ἡ) differs from that of Irenaeus’ recounting of Valentinian belief. Thus, he concludes, Ptolemy may not have been the author of Irenaeus’ account.

⁸¹ Ptolemy notes how his explanation here is supported by an adaptation of Paul’s statement from 1 Corinthians 8:6 which states that “there is one unengendered father, from whom are all things” (γὰρ ἔστιν ἀγέννητος ὁ πατήρ, ἐξ οὗ τὰ πάντα) (*PtFlora*, 33.7.6).

assumes that the demiurge exists on a level superior to “the adversary” since his nature is just.⁸² However, he offers no explanation for this assumption besides his previous claim that the demiurge must be of a different substance than the devil due to the just nature of the Mosaic law (*PtFlora* 33.7.6; 3.2; 3.5).⁸³

Ptolemy continues to expound on the natures and relationship between the perfect god, the demiurge, and the devil. He explains that the lower natures (φύσεις) actually stem from the first essence, or single eternal principle (μιάς ἀρχῆς τῶν ὄλων), that is unengendered and incorruptible and good (τῆς ἀγεννήτου καὶ ἀφθάρτου καὶ ἀγαθῆς) – obviously a reference to the perfect god (*PtFlora* 33.7.8). Ptolemy refers to the principle of the syzygies where two complementary or opposing forces exist but actually stem from a single source.⁸⁴ He then informs Flora that the relationship between the two natures and the single principle will be the subject of her next lesson (*PtFlora* 33.7.9) and abruptly ends this aspect of his discussion. Yet enough information has been provided by Ptolemy to reconstruct the simple model he has in mind.

The perfect god is the only unengendered principle who has created two other essences, the demiurge and the devil. Although both are inferior to the perfect god in nature, the demiurge is considered superior to the devil. Considering this relationship, the Mosaic law could not have been established by the perfect god since the law is not perfect. Yet the law is also not unjust, something which would reflect the nature of the adversary. Practically by process of elimination, Ptolemy claims that he has briefly though successfully illustrated that the Mosaic law must have originated with the creator god since both the craftsman and the law share a just nature (*PtFlora* 33.7.10). The names Jesus and Christ are never used by Ptolemy. Instead, he prefers Savior (σωτήρ).⁸⁵

⁸² Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 119.

⁸³ Ptolemy’s view that the creator is just though not perfect is similar to Marcion’s cosmic model (see Harnack, *Marcion*, 76. n.26 and 123 n.1).

⁸⁴ The lower natures are engendered by the single superior principle, though they do not share in his nature. The syzygy explanation is also found within another of the false scripture writings, the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*, where it is outlined more coherently (see chapter four of this dissertation).

⁸⁵ *PtFlora*, 3.5; 3.8; 4.1; 4.3; 4.11; 5.10; 7.5; 7.9.

As Markschies observes, this title of Christ must have been understood already by the audience, since there is no attempt to explain its usage to the audience.⁸⁶ Markschies claims that the Savior is not a fourth principle alongside the perfect god, the demiurge, and the devil. Instead, the Savior must be understood as the demiurge, as Ptolemy indicates in 3.6: Ἐτι τε τὴν τοῦ κόσμου δημιουργίαν αὐτοῦ ἰδίαν λέγει εἶναι τὰ τε πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ γεγονέναι καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ γεγονέναι οὐδὲν ὁ ἀπόστολος⁸⁷ (*PtFlora* 3.6, citing John 1:3). As such, claims Markschies, the Savior is something lesser than the perfect god.⁸⁸ This corresponds to a later statement in 7.4 that the creator “is different from the essences of the other two [principles].”⁸⁹ Such an interpretation is at odds with previous scholarship on *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora* and Valentinianism: “There can hardly be anything more contrasting to the Valentinian system than the identification of demiurge and σωτήρ.”⁹⁰ However, Thomassen observes that the Savior is superior to the demiurge since he is able to fulfill the pure laws of the unseen Father.⁹¹ He also notes that a Savior with a demiurgic function is “standard Valentinian doctrine.”⁹² Although Markschies’s argument is interesting, I do not find his conclusions warranted. The evidence cited does not correspond precisely to his explanation. Instead, I find Thomassen’s reconstruction more compelling as it is grounded in the claims of the text itself.

At this point in the letter, Ptolemy’s has outlined the relationship between the supernatural beings as well as his hermeneutic on the Mosaic law. He intends to demonstrate the fallacies of other Christian (and perhaps Jewish) groups about the nature of the Mosaic law and

⁸⁶ Markschies, “New Research,” 240.

⁸⁷ “And further, the apostle states that the craftsmanship of this world is his, and that ‘all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made....’”

⁸⁸ Markschies, “New Research,” 240-241.

⁸⁹ Οὗτος δὲ δημιουργὸς καὶ ποιητὴς τοῦδε τοῦ παντός ἐστιν κόσμου καὶ τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ ἕτερος ὢν παρὰ τὰς τούτων οὐσίας μέσος τε τούτων καθεστῶς, ἐνδίκως καὶ τὸ τῆς μεσότητος ὄνομα ἀποφέροιτο αὐν.

⁹⁰ Markschies, “New Research,” 243.

⁹¹ *The Spiritual Seed*, 123. Elsewhere, Thomassen is keenly interested in refuting the notion that the Savior is the psychic Christ, the son of the demiurge (125-6).

⁹² *The Spiritual Seed*, 123.

the lawgiver by using the words of the savior to explain the truth on these subjects. If my analysis is correct, Ptolemy considers his community (the spirituals) as the mortal counterparts of the perfect realm, while other Christian groups (the psychics) correlate to the realms of the demiurge. Although other Christians possess a heightened knowledge of the Mosaic law, it is only Ptolemy's community which has received the esoteric teaching on the true nature(s) of the Mosaic law and knowledge of false scripture. Thus, Ptolemy writes to Flora in order to initiate her into his community, advancing her standing from among the supposedly "lesser" (psychic) Christians.

3.2. The Tripartite Division of the Law

Ptolemy's letter illustrates an early type of source criticism. Ptolemy claims that "the entire law contained in the Pentateuch of Moses was not established by a single author, I mean not by god alone: rather, there are certain of its commandments that were established by human beings as well"⁹³ (*PtFlora* 33.4.1). There are mandates within the law that have been placed there by human hands (*PtFlora* 33.7.1); thus, Ptolemy does not intend to discount the idea that some portion of the Mosaic law has been divinely inspired.⁹⁴ Ptolemy concludes that there is evidence in the scriptures and Christ's teaching that attests to not one but three lawgivers. It is this discovery that has led Ptolemy to pen his letter to the otherwise unknown Flora whom he intends to initiate into the 'truth' concerning biblical law and the lawgivers.

Ptolemy begins the main argument of the letter by offering his thesis about the nature of the Mosaic law and its tripartite division (*PtFlora* 33.4.2ff). The first tier belongs to god. Although Ptolemy does not specifically describe this deity, it should be understood as a reference to the demiurge since Ptolemy has already argued in his letter that the law has not been provided by God the Father (*PtFlora* 33.3.4). The law, Ptolemy concludes, must have been imparted by a type of intermediate craftsman (*PtFlora* 33.7.3-7, 33.7.3). This is Ptolemy's just god, whose

⁹³ ὁ σύμπας ἐκεῖνος νόμος ὁ ἐμπεριεχόμενος τῆς Μωσέως πεντατεύχ' οὐ πρὸς ἑνὸς τινος νενομοθέτηται, λέγω δὴ οὐχ ὑπὸ μόνου θεοῦ, ἀλλ' εἰσὶ τινες αὐτοῦ προστάξεις καὶ ὑπ' ἀνθρώπων τεθείσαι.

⁹⁴ This claim marks a clear separation from Marcion's paradigm where the inferior creator is responsible for all of the Jewish scriptures and law. On the other hand, Ptolemy's claim can be quite naturally located within the Valentinian system where a spiritual germ from the perfect God manifests within the provisions set forth by the demiurge (see Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.5.1-6; *ANF* 1:322-323).

intentions were pure but whose law produced results that were imperfect. The second tier of the law belongs to Moses. Ptolemy explains that Moses ordained some commandments out of his own motivations instead of divine command. The third tier has been established by “the elders of the people” (τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους τοῦ λαοῦ). Similar to Moses, the elders have inserted their own ideas as divine commandments (*PtFlora* 33.4.2). To understand Ptolemy’s notion of false scripture, each of the three tiers requires further examination.

3.2.1. *The law of Moses*

Ptolemy claims that proof for his claim that the Mosaic law was established by three lawgivers can be found in the words of the savior (*PtFlora* 33.3.8; 4.1; 4.3;). Ptolemy cites the Matthean discussion of divorce (Matt 19.8ff; see also Matt 5.31-32; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18). Ptolemy reiterates Jesus’ point that the practice of divorce was not instituted by God but by Moses (*PtFlora* 33.4.4). As found in the Matthean citation, Ptolemy argues that God’s disapproval of the practice of divorce can be drawn from Genesis (Gen 2:24). For Ptolemy, this gospel pericope demonstrates how a command established by Moses actually contradicts God’s intentions. Thus, the law of Moses is not the same as the law of God (*PtFlora* 33.4.5-6, 10).

This is not to say that Moses instituted this mandate out of malevolence. Instead, Ptolemy puts forth an apologetic explanation for Moses’ action. The certificate of divorce was condoned by Moses “not of his own inclination but of necessity because of the weakness of those to whom it was ordained”⁹⁵ (*PtFlora* 33.4.6). The husbands were actually at risk of falling into further injustice since they were on such terrible terms with their wives. Moses’ actions, though somewhat deceptive, served to prevent the men from bringing about their own destruction (*PtFlora* 33.4.7-9). Moses’ law of divorce was established as “a second law” (δεύτερον τινα)⁹⁶ and the better of the two evils (*PtFlora* 33.4.8). Moses’ certificate of divorce (Deut 24:1-4), then, is Ptolemy’s first example of a false law.⁹⁷ Since this law was not instituted by the deity, Ptolemy questions its authenticity, categorizing it as false.

⁹⁵ οὐ κατὰ προαἶ ρεσιν ποιήσας τὴν ἑαυτοῦ, ἀλλὰ κατὰ ἀνάγκην διὰ τὴν τῶν νενομοθετημένων ἀσθένειαν.

⁹⁶ The notion of secondary law, or *deuterosis*, is a key aspect of the Didascalia Apostolorum’s notion of false scripture (see chapter three).

3.2.2. *The law of the elders*

Ptolemy offers a second proof that Christ knew of false scripture by pointing to the example of Jesus' discussion with the elders on the fifth commandment to honor one's parents (*PtFlora* 33.4.11; Matt 15:4-5; Exod 20:12). Although (the creator) god established this commandment, the elders were interrogated by Christ. He accused them of making the law void for the sake of their own traditions by advising children to offer financial support to them instead of their own parents – all under the guise of piety (Matt 15.5, summarized in *PtFlora* 33.4.12). He continues to cite from the Matthean account of this story which also quotes Isaiah 29:3 (*PtFlora* 33.4.13). The tradition of the elders on parental support is Ptolemy's second example of false law.

This piece of false scripture is more severe than that of Moses' certificate of divorce. As Ptolemy explains, the Ten Commandments are the only pure legislation within the Jewish scriptures. The Decalogue was inspired by the perfect god. Unlike Moses' addition to the law, which did not directly contradict a specific commandment by god the father, the elders have established a mandate in direct opposition to the fifth commandment.

Ptolemy concludes this section of his letter, which is the location for a significant number of prooftexts, by restating his thesis that the Mosaic law can be divided into three categories, each according to a particular lawgiver: Moses, the elders, or god (*PtFlora* 33.4.14). Ptolemy claims that his analysis of the gospel stories has demonstrated which portion of the law is genuine (ἀληθές). According to these accounts, Christ was aware of the contradictory nature of the laws established by Moses and the elders. Yet, according to Ptolemy, there are many believers who continue in ignorance and misunderstanding about the true nature of the Mosaic law. Ptolemy extrapolates from these examples in order to design a unique paradigm about false scripture within the Mosaic law. The 'gnosis' he offers to Flora is less an intuitive or mystical revelation but more a specific mode of interpretation of texts widely used by Jews and

⁹⁷ Quispel points out that there were other "orthodox" Christian authors who wrestled with the notion of human interpolations in the scriptures as evinced by Matthew 19:8 (*La Lettre*, 87). Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* 4.15.1-2; *ANF* 1:479-480) concedes that Jesus illustrates how Moses added his own teachings to the law of divorce as well as Paul's additions (1 Cor 7:12). Irenaeus explains this action as a privilege. In addition, the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* (3.54.1-2; *ANF* 8:248) parallels Ptolemy's analysis as will be investigated further in chapter four.

Christians.⁹⁸ Like Marcion, Ptolemy's critical eye leads him to label certain elements from the Jewish scriptures as inferior or disingenuous. Ptolemy's distinct emphasis on the nature of the law constructs a boundary between his community and the ones he creates for those other Christians who, as he perceives, are ignorant about the Mosaic law. Therefore, the notion of false scripture directly contributes to Ptolemy's presentation of Christian identity. By recognizing that the Mosaic law is not entirely divine in origin, the elite Christian disciple is able to navigate through the disingenuous portions of the law.

⁹⁸ Ptolemy's use of proof-texts from the gospels is only the first occurrence of this phenomenon in the present study. The use of Jesus' sayings in the gospel accounts is a common element among the false scripture writings under investigation in my dissertation. As mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, it seems probable that Ptolemy was influenced by either Marcion himself or Marcion's first generation of followers. Ptolemy's hermeneutic of using the words of the savior as proofs for his ideas reflects Marcion's observations about the two gods of the two testaments. Marcion saw a contradiction between the words of Christ and those of the god of the Old Testament. This observation led Marcion to conclude that there must be two gods represented in the texts. Like Marcion, Ptolemy considers the words of Christ as superior to any other teachings. This preference can be explained on the grounds that both authors considered themselves Christians since they place Christ's teachings above all else. Both authors also consider Christ to be the only and true representative of God the Father; therefore, only the words of Christ can offer knowledge about the discrepancies at hand.

Yet none of the false scripture texts under investigation in this dissertation claim to have been written or dictated by Christ. Each text, including Ptolemy's letter, presents its conclusions as part of an apostolic tradition. The chain of transmission explained by each author appears to represent the later exegetical traditions of Church authorities. Each author crafts a particular interpretation of the words of Christ as recorded in earlier texts. It is interesting that we do not possess, or read in other authors, a version of the false scripture phenomenon that claims direct dictation from Christ. Surely such a document would offer more authority among a wider variety of Christian congregations throughout the ancient world. Instead, the various texts seem to ground their believability and validity in a community's respective heroic figure(s) whether that be the Valentinian teacher Ptolemy (*PtFlora*), the apostles as a group (*Didascalia*), or Peter (*Pseudo-Clementines*). Even so, Ptolemy's letter is somewhat different from the other texts discussed here since Ptolemy is the author of the text that refers directly to the words of Christ whereas the others are considered pseudonymous. Yet even Ptolemy must present his own list of the gospel references to false scripture along with his subsequent explanations. Ptolemy must construct his argument piecemeal from the gospel material. This observation is important to my present study on how each false scripture writing functions to establish an identity for a community using a similar, though not identical, hermeneutic as other communities.

3.2.3. *The law of God*

Having presented Flora with the results of his biblical criticism, Ptolemy continues on to a more in-depth description of the law instituted by the demiurge. This subject constitutes the longest portion of the letter found in Epiphanius' writing.⁹⁹ Ptolemy's interest in explaining this aspect of his paradigm may be due to the complicated nature of the divinely ordained law and its various subdivisions. In addition, the fuller explanation of the divine law provides us with an opportunity to further highlight Ptolemy's notion of false scripture and its contribution to the rhetorical construction of group identity.

As Ptolemy has explained, three lawgivers are responsible for establishing the law. The first of these was the just creator who provided the original layer of the law before any human additions. The phrase "the law of God" (ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ νόμος) is Ptolemy's standard indication of the creator's mandates.¹⁰⁰ The semantics of Ptolemy's letter regarding 'god' can lead to confusion – does he mean the creator or the perfect god? Ptolemy, however, does offer clarification about this distinction in his conclusion.

Εἰ γὰρ μήτε ὑπ' αὐτοῦ τοῦ τελείου θεοῦ τέθειται οὗτος, ὡς ἐδιδάξαμεν, μήτε μὴν ὑπὸ τοῦ διαβόλου, ὃ μηδὲ θεμιτόν ἐστιν εἰπεῖν, ἕτερός τις ἐστι παρὰ τούτους οὗτος ὁ θέμενος τὸν νόμον. Οὗτος δὲ δημιουργὸς καὶ ποιητὴς τοῦδε τοῦ παντός ἐστιν κόσμου καὶ τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ.¹⁰¹ (*PtFlora* 33.7.3-4)

⁹⁹ The explanation provided in 33.5.2-15 is curiously summarized and repeated in the very next section, 33.6.1-6. Admittedly, I am unsure of what to make of this doublet. It does appear that either chapter can be removed without any serious damage to Ptolemy's overall discussion. Chapter five appears to be a more detailed explanation of the law of god. It includes more examples of each subdivision as well as a comparison with Paul's awareness of the symbolic understanding of the Jewish festivals. The same description can be given for the version found in chapter six. However, only the Paul of chapter six specifically refers to "a law interwoven with injustice...and the part not interwoven with the inferior..." (*PtFlora* 33.6.6). I am unaware of any research on this specific topic. I am not presently prepared to claim that the two chapters represent differing manuscripts nor do I make any claims as to the role of Epiphanius, or anyone else, in compiling any supposed sources. However, I do feel that this issue merits further study in the near future.

¹⁰⁰ *PtFlora* 33.5.1, 3, 7; 6.1; 7.1.

¹⁰¹ "For since this division of the law (that is, god's own law) was established neither by the perfect god himself, as we have taught, nor surely by the devil – which it would be wrong to say

Ptolemy, then, considers “the laws of god” to be the laws established by the creator. This does not indicate that the perfect god’s commandments are not reflected in portions of the laws of the lesser deity. Ptolemy’s intention is to explain how the law is not instituted directly by the perfect god but rather by the three sources: the demiurge, Moses, and the elders. Ptolemy therefore transitions into an elaborate schematic that further divides the law provided by the creator god into three subcategories: the pure law of God, the laws abolished by Christ, and the symbolic law (*PtFlora* 33.5.1; 6.1-5).

3.2.3.1. *The first subdivision: the pure law*

Ptolemy states that the first subdivision of god’s law is “the pure legislation not interwoven with evil”¹⁰² (*PtFlora* 33.5.1). This aspect of the creator’s law reflects the true law of the perfect god, God the Father, and is confirmed by the words of the savior. Consistent with Irenaeus’ account of the Valentinian myth, pure law has been unknowingly smuggled into the world via the demiurge.¹⁰³ Once again, Ptolemy buttresses his claim with Jesus’ teaching from the gospels, referring to Christ’s fulfillment of the law rather than its abolishment (Matt 5:17). Ptolemy implies that if Christ is interested in fulfilling the law, but does not actually maintain all elements of the law (picking grain on the Sabbath, etc.), then those elements of the law not kept by Jesus must be false or inferior: “for it did not have perfection”¹⁰⁴ (*PtFlora* 33.5.1). Jesus preserved only those laws which were familiar, or “not alien” (οὐ γὰρ ἦν ἀλλότριος αὐτοῦ), to him.

The first subdivision of god’s law is fulfilled, or completed, by Christ since, according to Ptolemy, this portion is divine in nature. Ptolemy defines this law as the Decalogue. The Ten Commandments reflect pure legislation that has not been corrupted; they are invulnerable to any

– then the establisher of this division of the law is distinct from them. And he is the craftsman and maker of the entire universe and of the things within it.”

¹⁰² τὴν καθαρὰν νομοθεσίαν τὴν ἀσύμπλοκον τῶν κακῶν.

¹⁰³ Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, 1.5.6 (*ANF* 1:323).

¹⁰⁴ οὐ γὰρ εἶχεν τὸ τέλειον.

corruption because they are derived from god the father though established by the creator.¹⁰⁵ However, because the Decalogue was delivered by the imperfect creator the mandates they require confirmation by Christ (*PtFlora* 33.5.3). Although not stated in *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*, it is possible that Ptolemy singles out the Decalogue as divine law based on his preference for Matthew chapter five.¹⁰⁶ If Ptolemy interprets the idea that not one letter of the law, not even one iota, will be ignored as a metaphor, the iota could be understood as the number ten. It appears that Ptolemy interprets the iota of Matthew 5:18 as the Ten Commandments. Ptolemy depicts Christ's function as one of discerning the true law from the false. I suggest that Ptolemy considers a person's salvation dependent upon knowing the true scriptures from the false ones and adequately following the 'right' commandments that avoid injustice.

By perceiving Christ as the one who was sent by God the Father to discern the true law from the inferior regulations of humans and the demiurge, Ptolemy also accepts Jesus' exegesis of the Ten Commandments as provided by the Gospel of Matthew (*PtFlora* 33.6.1).¹⁰⁷ Ptolemy includes specific references to certain antitheses regarding swearing falsely, anger, and lustful glares found only in the first gospel (Matt 5:21, 27, 33).

The overarching implications of Ptolemy's first subdivision are relevant to the present study for multiple reasons. Ptolemy appears interested in defending the validity of certain parts of the Mosaic law. Unlike Marcion who also argued for the presence of more than one lawgiver in the Jewish and Christian writings, Ptolemy does not choose to demote the entirety of the Mosaic law to an inferior status. The Decalogue must have been especially prized for Ptolemy and his community, though only as understood through the lens of Christ's teachings as recorded

¹⁰⁵ Even though this process of transmission may seem paradoxical since Ptolemy has already stated his case that the Mosaic law has not been delivered by God the Father, the Valentinian system does explain how a spiritual germ from the true God has been secretly smuggled into the commandments established by the creator (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, 1.5.6; *ANF* 1:323). Quispel argues that this solution to the problem of the demiurge's knowledge of the pleroma and the true law is a clear connection to Valentinian belief (*La Lettre*, 89-93).

¹⁰⁶ Implied in Williams, *Rethinking Gnosticism*, 87. This point is reflected in the Didascalia which also explains a mystical connection between Christ, the number ten, and the iota (see chapter three of this dissertation).

¹⁰⁷ Ptolemy's addition of the Matthean antitheses is not surprising given his interest in this gospel's presentation of Christ and the law.

in key passages from the Gospel of Matthew.¹⁰⁸ After all, Matthew's Christ is a lawgiver. He utilizes the gospel account to decide cases of contradictory material between the Mosaic law and the teachings of Christ. Ptolemy, then, understands his community as Christians – faithful followers of Christ – even if the religious practices of his group are linked to the Mosaic law which was often associated with Judaism. In this way, Ptolemy's work may have taken aim at appropriating and celebrating certain key elements of Judaism, such as the Decalogue, within his own interpretation and construction of Christian identity. The Mosaic law, or at least the 'pure' portions of it, are now associated with Christ and the perfect god. At the same time, the ability and knowledge to distinguish the so-called authentic material is reserved for Ptolemy's community alone. Although Ptolemy does not overtly state the idea, he implies that his community is to understand itself as the elect since other groups (as mentioned above) do not understand the nature of the Mosaic law.

Considering Ptolemy's interest in the Gospel of Matthew and its emphasis on the Mosaic law, it is odd that Ptolemy also recognizes the authority of Paul who often negates elements of the law. He includes Paul in his explanation of the law since Paul, as Ptolemy claims, also recognized the tripartite division of the Mosaic law. Even though Ptolemy acknowledges the disciples' awareness of "these teachings," he is more interested in citing specific verses from Paul. In *PtFlora* 33.6.6, Ptolemy refers to the Pauline notion that Christ abolished the law of commandments and ordinances.¹⁰⁹ Ptolemy assumes this passage as a reference to the false scripture theory. He also quotes Romans 7:12 as "proof" of Paul's knowledge of the pure law: "The law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good." The direct citation of Pauline material functions to align Ptolemy's teaching with that of the apostle to the Gentiles. If we accept the theory that Ptolemy writes, in part, to contest the authority of the Marcionites, then Ptolemy may be attempting to appropriate the figure of Paul over and against Marcion or perhaps Gentile Christians in general. In effect, Ptolemy argues that both Paul and Jesus have already recognized and explained the existence of the true law of god and the spurious interpolations that

¹⁰⁸ Ptolemy less frequently cites material found in the Gospels of Mark, Luke, and John as well as select Pauline writings (1 Cor, Rom, Eph). Yet, could the regular usage of the Gospel of Matthew point to a more eastern locale for Ptolemy, such as Syria?

¹⁰⁹ Ephesians 2:15. I describe Ephesians as Pauline since scholars doubt that Ephesians was actually written by Paul but instead by one of his followers in a later time.

have been interwoven within it. Ptolemy's presentation rhetorically validates his paradigm of false scripture, not to mention the authority of his own hermeneutic. Marcion's teaching would be implicitly portrayed as inferior since he was unable to recognize this distinction. In this manner, Ptolemy could construct the identity of his community as those who have the true knowledge of the Mosaic law and its legislators.

3.2.3.2. *The second subdivision: the laws abolished by Christ*

Ptolemy explains that the second subdivision of the law consists of interpolations of inferior and unjust laws.¹¹⁰ The contents of the second subdivision were abolished by Christ since they are inconsistent with the nature of the perfect god (*PtFlora* 33.5.1). Ptolemy categorizes the laws of the second subdivision as relating to "retaliation and repayment of those who have already committed a wrong"¹¹¹ such as sacrificing an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, or a murder for a murder (*PtFlora* 33.5.4; Lev 24:17, 20). These instances of so-called justice are considered unjust by Ptolemy because the secondary act of retaliation involves the very act originally prohibited.¹¹²

The original commandment against murder is part of the first subdivision of God's law (the pure law) since it is part of the Decalogue. It is one element of legislation that was established by the creator; its superior nature reflects the perfect God's goodness. Insofar as the law of retaliation is derived from this righteous mandate, the law of the second subdivision is still considered just. Nevertheless, confusion appears to have emerged in Ptolemy's community

¹¹⁰ Again, the god Ptolemy refers to here must be the creator-demiurge since portions of this deity's laws require perfection (*PtFlora* 33.4.2) – a quality that is not consistent with Ptolemy's understanding of a high, perfect God.

¹¹¹ Οὗτος ὁ κατὰ τὴν ἀμυναν καὶ ἀνταπόδοσιν τῶν προαδικησάντων κείμενος.

¹¹² In his comments on the discernment of the pure law and the inferior law, Quispel claims that the laws of the Old Testament are in a separate category than the Decalogue. The former are "harsh and severe," only necessary "after the worship of the Golden calf," and "have been abolished" thanks to the arrival of Christ (*La Lettre*, 93). However, *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora* makes no reference to the Golden calf. It appears that Quispel has (unknowingly?) harmonized *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora* with the Didascalia Apostolorum and/or the *Epistle of Barnabas* which make clear references to Christ's liberation from the harsh laws instituted on account of the Golden calf incident. See my later chapter on the Didascalia Apostolorum for a complete analysis of this idea.

regarding the notion of retaliation and whether or not this practice is at odds with the Decalogue. Therefore, Ptolemy explains that the content of the second subdivision was abolished by Christ.

Τοῦτο δὲ τὸ πρόσταγμα δίκαιον μὲν ἀλλῶς καὶ ἦν καιῶ ἔστι, διὰ τὴν ἀσθένειαν τῶν νομοθετηθέντων ἐν παρεκβάσει τοῦ καθαρῶ νόμου τεθέν, ἀνοϊκειον δὲ τῷ τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν ὄλων φύσει τε καὶ ἀγαθότητι.¹¹³ (*PtFlora* 33.5.5)

It appears that Ptolemy himself is stuck in a contradiction: the *lex talionis* cannot be divine and spurious at the same time. Recognizing the situation, Ptolemy states that Christ's decision to excise the *lex talionis* was made out of necessity; otherwise a contradiction would exist between the commandment against killing and another law condoning killing as a punishment (*PtFlora* 33.5.6). Ptolemy insinuates that Christ's verdict on the matter must have appeared complicated to Ptolemy's community since both the supposed pure law of the fifth commandment against killing as well as the *lex talionis* extrapolated from it (*PtFlora* 33.5.7).¹¹⁴

Ptolemy again raises the danger of altering the Corban law as discussed in Matt 15:4: "For god spoke: 'He who speaks evil of father or mother, let him surely die'" – the very example of how the elders, the third source behind the Mosaic law, fabricated inferior law contrary to the divine lawgiver. This mandate itself calls for the punishment of death. In the end, Ptolemy apparently can offer no logic to provide a resolution to the issue. If the *lex talionis* is preserved, it contradicts the fourth commandment which Ptolemy considers pure and divine. However, if the law is abolished (which is Ptolemy's eventual decision), then the death penalties instituted by god in examples like Exod 20:12 (Matt 15:4) should not to be enforced. Both the commandment and the secondary legislation derived from it are just since they both spring from the divine. The apparent contradiction arises on account of the weakness and inability of humans to properly

¹¹³ "But otherwise, this commandment both was and is just, having been established as a deviation from the pure law because of the weakness of those to whom it was ordained; yet it is incongruous with the nature and goodness of the father of the entirety."

¹¹⁴ Even though this section of the letter engages the second tier of the inferior law of the creator, we must infer that here Ptolemy is referencing the perfect god and not the creator god since the pure law is traced back to the former. Ptolemy's lack of clarity regarding the deities contributes to the confusion regarding the attitude toward *lex taliones*.

follow the pure law.¹¹⁵ Ptolemy's paradoxical position may find resolution in the Valentinian cosmological myth that explains that this world is an imperfect reflection of another more perfect realm (e.g. *PtFlora* 33.7.7). Valentinians believe that in the perfect realm, everyone would be able to adequately follow the law and the secondary law of retaliation would not be necessary.¹¹⁶ If we accept this hypothesis, then Ptolemy is able to justify the existence of the apparent contradiction over the *lex talionis* by understanding that the inferior legislation of the creator, the second subdivision of a death penalty, exists (1) in the earthly realm only, not in the pleroma, and (2) is abolished by Christ in place of a more perfect legal system.

In an attempt to offer some resolution on the issue, Ptolemy states that the second mandate about retaliation was ordained as "a second law" (δεύτερον νόμον νομοθετῶν) (*PtFlora* 33.5.6). This phrase appears to signify those laws that are contrary to the original ones (*PtFlora* 33.5.7). The phrase δεύτερον νόμον, also echoed in *PtFlora* 33.4.8, is significant for the larger textual comparisons of this dissertation. As will be demonstrated in the next chapter, the Didascalia Apostolorum – another false scripture text investigated in this project – describes a set of secondary, inferior laws using the same δεύτερον term. The connection between the two texts is striking, and will be discussed fully in a later chapter. Nevertheless, within Ptolemy's work the *deuterosis* term refers to secondary laws that are unjust and inferior to those considered pure and divine.

Ptolemy's discussion of the second subdivision demonstrates that, like the law of the first subdivision of god's law, the divine law can only be verified by the words of the savior. The above analysis of Ptolemy's inclusion of Matt 15:4 (Exod 20:12) is one example of the importance of the words of Christ to discern the true law from the false. Another example is found in Ptolemy's direct discussion of the *lex talionis* (*PtFlora* 33.6.2-3). The command of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" (Lev 24:20) must be false, according to Ptolemy, since it

¹¹⁵ The notion that humans are not able to adequately keep the Mosaic law is also found in the Didascalia (see chapter three). However, the Didascalia's explanation – which is closely tied to the idea of false scripture, or *deuterosis* – claims that it was specifically those Israelites traveling with Moses who disobeyed God's original laws. This distinction is not found overtly in *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*, although Ptolemy does mention that it was "the weakness of those to whom it was ordained" that created the need for the second subdivision of God's law.

¹¹⁶ Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.7.1-5 (ANF 1:325-326).

is unjust and contradictory to the teaching of Christ. Ptolemy cites Matt 5:39, Jesus' command to turn the other cheek, as a clear contradiction to the *lex talionis*.

The important role of Christ in identifying false scripture is an important aspect of Ptolemy's hermeneutic and is crucial regarding the construction of identity. Ptolemy's explanation of the Mosaic law illustrates his unspoken claim to be a Christian, and one who is struggling with the role of the Mosaic law within his community.

3.2.3.3. *The third subdivision: the symbolic law*

The final subdivision of the Mosaic law is what Ptolemy categorizes as symbolic or allegorical law. It has been observed that according to Valentinian cosmology the elements of this world are a reflection of the creator's subconscious knowledge of the pleroma.¹¹⁷ Ptolemy applies his Valentinian teaching to this subcategory of god's law by explaining that it is modeled after the superior, spiritual realm (*PtFlora* 33.5.2, 6.4-5). Like the previous subdivision, these laws also required the involvement of Christ. According to Ptolemy, it was the savior who altered this portion of the law from the perceptible, visible level to the spiritual, invisible one (*PtFlora* 33.5.8; 6.4). Ptolemy specifically refers to several of the Jewish ritualistic practices in regard to the symbolic law including offerings, circumcision, the Sabbath, fasting, Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread (*PtFlora* 33.5.8). Christ abolished these practices on a physical level, namely their cultic execution, and provided a spiritual or allegorical meaning (*PtFlora* 33.5.9).

Ptolemy's letter includes a specific, though brief, explanation about how each ceremonial practice was meant to be implemented on an allegorical level. Concerning offerings, Ptolemy explains that god's law was never directed toward animals or incense. Instead, spiritual praises, glorifications, prayers of thanksgiving, and good deeds were the true intentions of the commandments on offerings (*PtFlora* 33.5.10). In addition, the law of circumcision was not meant to be a circumcision of the foreskin but a spiritual circumcision of the heart (*PtFlora*

¹¹⁷ Quispel, (*La Lettre*, 98) cites Irenaeus *Adv. Haer.* 1.18.2 (*ANF* 1:343) and Tertullian *Adv. Val.* 4 (*ANF* 3:505) as evidence of his claim.

33.5.11).¹¹⁸ The spiritual explanation of the Sabbath is briefly explained as the avoidance of wicked acts (*PtFlora* 33.5.12).¹¹⁹

Ptolemy spends a considerable amount of space on the allegorical explanation of fasting. Like the other ceremonial practices mentioned, fasting has also been understood allegorically: it is interpreted ethically as abstinence from all bad deeds (*PtFlora* 33.5.13). However, Ptolemy does not diminish the importance of a physical fast due to its ability to improve the soul – as long as it is practiced in a reasonable fashion. By reasonable fasting Ptolemy means not imitating other people, not simply fasting out of habit, or fasting out of an obligation due to a certain religious significance or prescription (*PtFlora* 33.5.13). True fasting in the physical realm, like the other ceremonial practices, serves as a memorial to the more pure intention of fasting in the spiritual realm (*PtFlora* 33.5.15).

Finally, Ptolemy reveals to Flora the spiritual meaning of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. These festivals are, according to Ptolemy, images of a spiritual realm. Ptolemy has received his understanding of this aspect of the Mosaic law from Paul, apparently via apostolic tradition. This claim functions rhetorically to bolster Ptolemy's authority and mode of scriptural interpretation and thereby provide validity to his message. He interprets Paul as claiming that Christ represents the sacrificial lamb of the Passover meal (1 Cor 5:7). In addition, the leaven referred to in the Unleavened Bread festival is actually a reference to evil and not dough (*PtFlora* 33.5.15).

Ptolemy's attitude toward such key markers of Jewish and (to a certain extent) Jewish Christian identity have larger repercussions regarding how he constructs his idea of religious and social identity. Ptolemy has clearly established his community as Christian by the repeated emphasis on the role of Christ in fulfilling the authentic laws of god while rejecting the false portions. His discussion of the third subdivision is no different: it is Christ who has arrived to explain the true meaning of the ceremonial commands. Accordingly, Ptolemy does not advocate

¹¹⁸ This claim could easily be explained as a literal reading of Paul's Letter to the Romans (especially 2:25-29 but also 10:1-10). Ptolemy also refers to Paul directly when discussing festivals (*PtFlora* 33.5.15, 6.6).

¹¹⁹ Ptolemy's acceptance of the Sabbath, albeit on an allegorical basis, differs strikingly from Marcion's supposed 25th Antithesis about how the Creator ordained the Sabbath yet Christ took it away (Harnack, *Marcion*, 62).

many of the ceremonial practices that would associate his community with the Jews or perhaps Jewish Christians. The practical execution of these regulations is replaced with a spiritual or allegorical understanding.¹²⁰ In effect, the potency of these practices is neutralized, along with Ptolemy's connection to any Jewish religious roots.¹²¹ If Ptolemy's aim was to disconnect his community from Judaism, one aspect of the process of creating boundaries among the contemporary social groups, then the position that the first group targeted by Ptolemy – those who misunderstand the law as instituted by the perfect god – are actually Christians *and* Jews.

3.3. Ptolemy and the Mosaic Law

After reviewing Ptolemy's explanation for the Mosaic law and its three lawgivers, it is clear that he considers a significant portion of the Mosaic law to be intertwined with false and misleading passages. It is possible that Ptolemy wrote his letter as a type of polemic on the authenticity of the Mosaic law. After all, his discussion would not be welcomed by the Jews of his day. He claims that the majority of the Mosaic law is not divine. Much of the Jewish regulations are the result of an inferior deity rather than the perfect God (*PtFlora* 33.3.4). It can be argued that Ptolemy recommends the dissolution of portions of the Mosaic law, particularly divorce, circumcision, the Sabbath, fasting and certain festivals. In fact, laws like the *lex talionis* can be contrary to the pure law of the Ten Commandments (*PtFlora* 33.5.4-7; 33.6.2-3). Other portions of the law have been invented and interpolated by humans, such as Moses and the elders. Only the Decalogue has avoided corruption – though even these directives are unable to stand on their own since they require fulfillment by Christ. Even those elements of the Mosaic law that were divinely ordained were misinterpreted and taken literally and not symbolically as they were intended (*PtFlora* 33.5.8-15; 33.6.4-6). Ptolemy's aim, then, is to dissolve key

¹²⁰ See the *Epistle of Barnabas* for comparisons (e.g., 2.6, 3.6, 10.12; *ANF* 1:137, 138, 143).

¹²¹ Marksches has observed that the headings for each of the three sections of the Mosaic law echo Hellenistic and rabbinical literature of the time, such as the written laws received through succession and laws not written but transmitted orally by the Pharisees ("New Research," 235-6). Even so, Marksches argues that the solution to these problems found in the *Letter to Flora* is distinct to Ptolemy (237-8) – especially the negative depiction of Moses and the elders.

elements of Jewish identity within his community.¹²² His goal, I suggest, is to construct a new form of social identity by first tearing down any existing markers of identity while at the same time offering new markers that cohere with his own theological stance. Diluting the potency of the Jewish traditions could have been a motivating factor for Ptolemy's actions.

At the same time, there is evidence that Ptolemy hopes to salvage the Jewish scriptures through his presentation of the Mosaic law. If Ptolemy was truly interested in completely dismantling the Jewish scriptures, religious practices, and social customs, then why does he preserve any of it? As I have argued above, Ptolemy was likely influenced to some degree by Marcion, probably while both authors resided in Rome. If Ptolemy shared Marcion's view of the Mosaic law, why would he hesitate to condemn the entire canon? It is his moderation in this regard that indicates that Ptolemy held a positive attitude about the Mosaic law – at least relative to certain groups of Christians. Ptolemy's position is not as extreme as Marcion or even other "Gnostic" Christians who might have offered a new configuration of the very biblical characters and narratives they appropriate for their own use. Ptolemy simply recognizes that evidence can be offered from the scripture that supports the idea that the Mosaic law has been established by more than one source. Yet at the same time there are portions that deserve to be salvaged, most importantly the Decalogue. The false scripture has simply been intertwined with the authentic material. Obviously, then, Ptolemy believes authentic material does exist.

The preservation of portions of the Mosaic law is not a regulation instituted by Ptolemy. According to his letter, this view is modeled after Christ's own perceptions of the law (e.g. Matt 5:17-18). Another reason why Ptolemy might uphold the Mosaic law is that he claims that the laws are just even if they are not perfect. They are not the result of a malevolent being but one who desires to spread justice in the world (*PtFlora* 33.3.5). The Mosaic law, then, is important within Ptolemy's community. In addition, Ptolemy does not declare that all of the Jewish customs derived from the law be negated. Instead, he only discards the portions he deems unnecessary by reinterpreting them in a symbolic and ethical manner.¹²³ For Ptolemy, elements

¹²² J. Quasten, *Patrology v.1: The Beginnings of Patristic Literature* (Westminster, MD: Spectrum, 1966), 312.

¹²³ *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora* and the *Epistle of Barnabas* share this allegorical approach.

of the Mosaic law are authentic and valuable; they play a positive role in the lives of humans so long as they are properly discerned.

However, this is not to say that *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora* does not indicate the existence of false scripture. The above discussion has clearly demonstrated that not all of the Mosaic law is authentic to the perfect god. As Ptolemy's subdivisions of god's law illustrate, some of the inauthentic material involves key ethical and ritualistic practices of Jewish and Christian religious life. Some passages and practices are maintained, others are outright rejected, and still others are re-interpreted symbolically. Ptolemy's false scripture argument provides a manner of scriptural interpretation that constructs and validates his ideal of Christian identity and the role of the Mosaic law within his believing community.

Christian authors searched for ways to explain their conceptions of their relationship with the Jewish scriptures. While some Christian authors such as Marcion or that of the *Epistle of Barnabas* demoted the scriptures and even attacked their origin and the material they contain, there were other Christians who chose to accept the Mosaic law within their boundaries of group identity and religious practice. The Pseudo-Clementines and the Gospel of Matthew are commonly cited in this regard. Such decisions were a result of differing manners of scriptural interpretation.

Despite the significant variations in how Christians read and valued Scripture, it is possible to discern a similar hermeneutical process at work, which involved three simultaneous steps: appropriation, negation, and erasure. Christians claimed that they alone could properly interpret Scripture. They negated the claim of the Jews to their own scriptures by reading them differently, even counter to how (other) Jewish groups would read them. They erased the processes of this appropriation by claiming that the Christian reading was in fact the ancient and original truth; the Jews had never understood the true meaning of their own Scripture.¹²⁴

Ptolemy's Letter to Flora illustrates this process. Even though we cannot be sure about the identity of those whom Ptolemy criticized, there is cause to include Jewish interpretations among the possible rhetorical foils – especially considering his allegorical understanding of Jewish religious practices. At the same time, it appears that Ptolemy was engaged in establishing the proper interpretation of the Mosaic law and its origins with other Christians. Ptolemy's letter illustrates the process of constructing identity during a time when there were no solid boundaries.

¹²⁴ King, *What is Gnosticism?*, 46-47.

The second-century Christian authors invented some of the earliest borders and paradigms of what was to be considered Christian identity.

Ptolemy's generation had to deal with a growing body of literature that claimed apostolic authority in a time when there was no fixed New Testament canon.¹²⁵ The available Christian writings from the first few centuries demonstrate the variety of ways in which Jesus Christ and his mission were depicted and whether or not his message fulfills the expectations outlined in the Jewish scriptures. As a Christian who has struggled with understanding Christ's relationship to the Jewish law, Ptolemy portrays Christ's role as an emissary of the perfect god who has arrived in order to distinguish the authentic laws of God from the false regulations that have been interwoven with it. Ptolemy has gleaned Christ's purpose by investigating Jesus' own actions and words as retold in the Gospels and Paul's writings. These statements are used as proof-texts that either verify or negate certain regulations found in the Jewish scriptures. A close reading of the biblical texts discovers peculiar contradictions and literary difficulties. Having looked into such passages, Ptolemy recognizes that the Mosaic law has been established by more than one source. As a Valentinian, Ptolemy details how the tripartite law reflects the nature of each of its lawgivers. Since the Valentinians understand the cosmos to contain beings of three different natures – the spiritual, the psychic, and the material – Ptolemy incorporates this theology into his observations about the Mosaic law. Each of these three types of beings has contributed to the law. Moses and the elders instituted regulations reflecting their material nature. The creator provided laws that, although of a higher order than the material, reflect the inferior psychic version of the highest realm. The true and pure laws of the perfect god could only find expression within the lesser psychic law until they could be perfected by Christ. Ptolemy's explanation of the Mosaic law, then, is a result of a critical investigation of the scriptures, similar to Marcion's, that was integrated within the Valentinian theology he espouses.

Ptolemy does not negate the importance of the Mosaic law – or the Jewish scriptures for that matter. He argues for a renegotiation of the authenticity and meaning of a variety of specific elements of it. His attitude toward the Mosaic law and the Jewish scriptures places him on a continuum of religious groups of his time, each of which held its own position on the value of the Jewish laws and customs. That Ptolemy devoted a letter to the topic of the authenticity and function of the Mosaic law demonstrates that there was a need to do so. *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*

¹²⁵ Williams, *Rethinking Gnosticism*, 85.

serves to construct and support his sense of Christian identity apart from other contemporary Christian groups.

4. Ptolemy, False Scripture, and Christian Identity

Ptolemy's description of the Jewish law offers a unique expression of Christian identity. The root of Ptolemy's view relates to his observations about inauthentic scripture. He considers the Decalogue to be divine law that, since the arrival of Christ, is perfect. At the same time, however, Ptolemy eliminates religious practices like circumcision, fasting, the Sabbath, and particular festivals by claiming they have been focused on earthly matters instead of their true spiritual (allegorical) meaning. Ptolemy's selectivity regarding the Mosaic law is an indication of an ongoing process of the negotiation of religious identity of his group. The conclusion of this chapter is devoted to summarizing how Ptolemy's explanation of the tripartite division of the law, especially the notion of false scripture, contributes to his sense of group identity.

4.1. Competing Interpretations of the Mosaic Law

I argue that *Ptolemy's Letter* represents one side of a debate over the proper interpretation of the Jewish scriptures that existed in Rome in the late second century.¹²⁶ Ptolemy presents an interpretation of the Mosaic law that utilizes a hermeneutic similar to the one espoused by Marcion; that is, the Jewish writings are not the product of the perfect god but rather an inferior demiurge. Even so, Ptolemy's claim that the Mosaic law contains a mixture of authentic and false law is a significant variant of Marcion's approach.¹²⁷ Ptolemy's letter is a tutorial on how to

¹²⁶ Quispel also suggests that Ptolemy's interest in writing to Flora is to further circumscribe the boundaries of his own ideal Christian community apart from others which existed in Rome at the end of the second-century. Although I agree with Quispel's conclusion, I am less enthusiastic about his specific description of Ptolemy's competitors. Quispel argues that Ptolemy's work is designed as a type of middle path between the more extremist views of Marcion, which aimed at severing Christianity's ties with Judaism, and the "catholic" position that accepted and appropriated various aspects of Jewish belief and praxis. I am less inclined to utilize the term 'catholic' since it is a non-descriptive term. There is no clear definition of what a 'catholic Christian' was in the ancient world.

¹²⁷ A useful summary of Marcion and his beliefs can be found in David Wayne Deakle's *The Fathers Against Marcionism: A Study of the Methods and Motives in the Developing Patristic Anti-Marcionite Polemic* (Ph.D. dissertation, Saint Louis University, 1991).

distinguish between these two categories of legislation. It is possible to understand Ptolemy's conception of the Mosaic law to be at odds with that of Marcion.

Further analysis supports the dissonance between Marcion and Ptolemy. Marcion conceived of only one lawgiver, the creator, and does not acknowledge the input of Moses or the elders. The same cannot be said of Ptolemy's letter since he explains that there are three lawgivers. Marcion denied that Christ fulfilled any of the Jewish laws, though Ptolemy claims Christ fulfilled the true laws of God. In addition, Marcion argued that the disciples conspired in a plot to embed Christ's message within the inferior Jewish customs; Ptolemy, however, views the disciples in a positive light, working alongside Paul with the proper understanding of the tripartite division of the law (*PtFlora* 33.6.6). Also, Marcion would not have acknowledged the legitimacy of the several scriptural references to the Gospel of Matthew (especially 5:17-18) found in *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora* since they do not find a parallel in Luke.

The use of allegorical interpretation is a curious aspect of Ptolemy's paradigm of false scripture. On one hand, it may contribute to my hypothesis that Ptolemy is in conflict with Marcion and his followers. Marcion rejected allegorical interpretation. Ptolemy's allegorical explanation of what may be characterized as central Jewish practices illustrates that these ordinances are divine in nature; their nature is simply not compatible with the material or even psychic realms but rather the spiritual realm. Admittedly, the allegorical interpretation in *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora* seems alien alongside the literalist arguments so prevalent within the rest of the document. Yet Ptolemy is comfortable joining these two approaches in order to accomplish his interpretive goal of both attacking the validity of certain religious practices while simultaneously verifying the spiritual nature of the portions of the Mosaic law which provide the basis for these same practices.

The theological differences between Marcion and Ptolemy may reflect a different interpretation and dependence on the apostle Paul. "All Christians appealed both to Scripture and to revelation in Christ mediated through apostolic authority, but they did so differently."¹²⁸ Both Marcion and Ptolemy attribute their teachings to their own reading of Paul's epistles as well as

¹²⁸ King, *What is Gnosticism?*, 28; see especially note 24 which cites *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*.

the gospel stories about Jesus.¹²⁹ Marcion viewed Paul alone as providing the accurate and uncorrupted gospel message about Jesus Christ. As a Valentinian, Ptolemy's apostolic authority would trace back through Valentinus to Theudas and finally to Paul. As both leaders professed their respective ideas on the Mosaic law, their perceptions of validity would require reference to Paul. Ptolemy clearly argues that Paul was aware of false passages – a notion not found among any other teachers.

Furthermore, Ptolemy's tripartite explanation of the Mosaic law is grounded in Valentinian cosmology. One of the most recognizable criteria of the Valentinian system that is featured in *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora* is a tripartite division of the cosmos, particularly humanity. The upper realm of the pleroma is reflected in spiritual humans, the middle realm of the psychic byproducts of Sophia's fall are reflected in the psychic humans, while the lower realm of matter is the nature of the hylic beings.¹³⁰ The *Letter to Flora* demonstrates that the higher, perfect god did not establish the Mosaic law. It was instituted by the lower demiurge, Moses, and the Jewish elders. However, certain portions of the demiurge's laws do reflect the pure laws of the perfect god. Valentinians explain this occurrence by means of their cosmic myth and its report that a spiritual germ was delivered into the lower realm through the creator.¹³¹ Yet, there is no indication that Valentinus ever taught about the existence of false scripture in the scriptures or a means to distinguish it from the genuine portions. As I have argued above, this is an adaptation of Valentinus' teaching that was likely a result of Ptolemy's familiarity with Marcion's biblical criticism.

It appears that Ptolemy responds to the theological competition by incorporating a version of Marcion's biblical criticism within a Valentinian cosmological system. Ptolemy utilizes the evidence of contradictions unearthed by Marcion to demonstrate the existence and accuracy of Valentinus' views regarding the existence of a perfect god, a demiurge, and an earthly devil. Each of these figures represents the three realms of Valentinus' cosmos: respectively, the pneumatic, the psychic, and the hylic. Ptolemy specifically connects the

¹²⁹ Although the two authors differ in their gospel preferences; Marcion preferring an adapted version of Luke while Ptolemy seems primarily interested in Matthew and, to a lesser extent, John.

¹³⁰ Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, 1.6.2; 1.7.5 (ANF 1:324; 326).

¹³¹ Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, 1.5.6 (ANF 1:323).

adversary with the corrupted material world, god the father with incorruptibility, and the demiurge with the intermediate realm.

Τοῦ μὲν γὰρ ἀντικειμένου ἐστὶν ἡ οὐσία φθορά τε καὶ σκότος ὑλικὸς γὰρ οὗτος καὶ πολυσχιδής, τοῦ δὲ πατρὸς τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν τοῦ ἀγεννήτου ἡ οὐσία ἐστὶν ἀφθαρσία τε καὶ φῶς αὐτοόν, ἀπλοῦν τε καὶ μονοειδές· ἡ δὲ τούτου οὐσία διττὴν μὲν τινὰ δύναμιν προήγαγεν, αὐτὸς δὲ τοῦ κρείττονός ἐστιν εἰκῶν. ¹³² (*PtFlora* 33.7.7)

Therefore, we may characterize the three divisions of the Mosaic law in the following way: the pure law was derived from god the father from the uppermost realm while the inauthentic scripture was instituted by the demiurge as well as Moses and the elders, a result of the lower intermediate and material realms. Ptolemy's paradigm of the law fits neatly with the three cosmic realms of Valentinian theology.

It is interesting to note here that Ptolemy implicitly connects Moses and the Jewish elders with the devil as the representatives of the material realm. This connection might explain Ptolemy's interest in dissolving what scholars consider key markers of Jewish identity such as the Sabbath, circumcision, offerings, and festivals. Therefore, Ptolemy's proposed group identity appears interested in severing any ties with Judaism.

The above analysis of the law is further supported by Ptolemy's discussion of erroneous beliefs in the introduction of the letter. Ptolemy brands as incorrect the beliefs of two groupings of people: those who claim the Mosaic law was established by the perfect god and those who argue it was established by the devil. Since the Mosaic law does not adequately reflect their natures, a third option, a demiurge, must not only exist but also be responsible for instituting the law. The introduction of a demiurge figure to explain the nature of the Mosaic law validates Valentinian belief in three cosmic realms.

Ptolemy's rhetorical categorization of these 'erroneous' beliefs probably masks a diverse range of beliefs held by any number of social groups. In the discussion above, I suggested that the Sethians may be one intended target of Ptolemy's second grouping, those who consider the lawgiver to be the devil. The first group seems to reflect a number of monotheistic Jewish and Christian groups. Unfortunately, Ptolemy's lack of specificity prevents a more exact

¹³² "For the essence of the adversary is both corruption and darkness, for the adversary is material and divided into many parts; while the essence of the unengendered father of the entirety is both incorruptibility and self-existent light, being simple and unique. And the essence of this intermediate produced a twofold capacity, for he is an image of the better god."

identification. Nevertheless, I offer that the exact definition of these groups is less important to Ptolemy. Ptolemy is more interested in illustrating that he and his community are the pneumatics, the highest category of humans within the Valentinian system, since they alone have disentangled the true law from the false law.

If the representatives of this model are accurate, Ptolemy would imagine that he and his community are the elite of humanity who are destined to return to the ideal realm of the perfect god. They alone are able to discern the pure or spiritual aspects of the Jewish scriptures. Although he does recognize the partial elevation, or salvation, of psychic beings he does not afford them the same status as the spiritual beings. He would not fault their faith but their inability to realize that the spiritual laws differ from the psychic ones. The exclusivity of Ptolemy's system, then, supports my proposal that Ptolemy is engaged in a competition among Christian factions within Roman society. Ptolemy's tradition functions to construct a sense of Christian identity apart from other Christians.

The Valentinians emphasized that, at the eschaton, the recognition of special wisdom would elevate them to the pleroma. In a number of places in the above discussion, however, I noted that the false scripture argument within *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora* is not present or implied within other Valentinian writings. This could indicate that Ptolemy perceived his own particular community to be somewhat separate from other Valentinian groups. Ptolemy's teaching about the existence of the false scripture, then, is central to the community's self-definition as those who are worthy (*PtFlora* 33.7.9).

4.2. Conclusion

Ptolemy's Letter to Flora demonstrates how a particular manner of scriptural hermeneutic functions to construct and maintain social identity. By presenting a rare argument that the Jewish scriptures contain false and inauthentic material, Ptolemy is able to appropriate a level of control over the supposedly accurate reading of these writings. The false scripture is recognizable when compared with the teaching of Christ; it can be found by a close reading of the gospels when Jesus contests the validity of certain ideas or practices of his day. Ptolemy's knowledge on this matter is buttressed by his claim of apostolic authority. Each of these factors contributes to the manner in which Ptolemy constructs Christian identity and simultaneously disenfranchises other interpretations of the Mosaic law. Although it is impossible to know the identity of the social

groups Ptolemy intends to target, certain hypotheses have emerged throughout the above analysis.

Ptolemy portrays his community as pious Christians who accurately follow and understand Christ's teachings. The important function of Christ in *Ptolemy's Letter* demonstrates his Christian outlook. Christ is the only source for identifying the false portions of the Mosaic law. Similarly, only by following Christ can the believer learn the truth about the Mosaic law and the various sources who established it. This knowledge is shared only with those who are worthy – i.e. those who adhere to Ptolemy's authority and remain part of his community, even if his community is part of the larger Christian community of Rome. Most Christian groups who wrestled with their relationship to Judaism, the Jewish scriptures, and the Jewish law realized two choices: appropriation or rejection. These could be enacted to varying degrees and often in conjunction with one another. However, Ptolemy introduced a third choice that included appropriating certain portions of the law while simultaneously rejecting others.

CHAPTER 3: THE SECOND LEGISLATION OF THE DIDASCALIA APOSTOLORUM

1. Introduction

The Didascalia Apostolorum is a pseudepigraphical text which claims to represent the results of the Apostolic Council described in Acts 15 (DA 24, *CSCO* 408: 219; proem¹).² The text is devoted to ecclesiastical and communal matters which likely reflect the author's third-century Syrian setting. The twenty-six chapters of the Didascalia cover a range of issues such as the hierarchical structure of the church, the roles and responsibilities of the church community, heresy and proper theology. The Didascalia is as an important text in the study of Jewish Christianity since it attests to a third-century Syrian community that is in the process of resolving the tensions relating to the markers of Jewish and Christian identity.³ In recent decades, the Didascalia has offered fascinating evidence for the position available to women (or, rather, the positions used to control women's activities in the church) since the text specifically covers women laity (DA 3) as well as the positions of widow (DA 14-15) and deaconess (DA 16).⁴

¹ The proem is not found in Connolly's translation (*Didascalia Apostolorum: The Syriac Version Translated and accompanied by the Verona Latin Fragments*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929) but can be found in Arthur Vööbus' *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac (Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 1979, vols. 401, 402, 407, 408), 7-9*. Vööbus' analysis of the proem can be found in *Didascalia* vol. 402, 36*-37*. The brief proem has two central points: (1) the apostles, Paul, and James worked together to ratify the Didascalia Apostolorum, and (2) those who keep the commandments of the Didascalia gain eternal life while those who reject these teachings are eternally condemned to torment (7-9).

² All English and Syriac citations from the Didascalia in this chapter are dependent upon Vööbus' 1979 edition in the *CSCO*. Syriac words are cited from vols. 401 and 407, and English words from vols. 402 and 408. Latin passages are from Connolly's 1929 edition.

³ See, for example, M. Simon's *Verus Israel*; A. Marmorstein "Judaism and Christianity in the Middle of the Third Century" (*Hebrew Union College Annual* 10 (1935): 223-263); and especially G. Strecker's "Appendix 1: On the Problem of Jewish Christianity."

⁴ See Charlotte Methuen's "The "Virgin Widow": A Problematic Social Role for the Early Church?" in *Recent Studies in Early Christianity: A Collection of Scholarly Essays* (ed. Everett Ferguson; New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1999); *eadem*, "Widows, Bishops and the Struggle for Authority in the *Didascalia Apostolorum*," *JEH* 46 (1995): 197-213); Charlotte Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity: Rabbinic and Christian Reconstructions of Biblical Gender*

Despite these scholarly interests,⁵ the most persistent topic throughout the Didascalia is the argument of the second legislation. Although this issue pervades the text,⁶ its importance has been largely ignored or treated as simply one aspect of the study of Jewish Christianity. The minimal attention devoted to the second legislation within scholarship obscures its rhetorical importance in the construction of social identity. A majority of the Didascalia's issues are rooted in the underlying idea that a significant portion of the Mosaic laws can be ignored since they were established as a temporary punishment. This paradigm provides the basis for the author's understanding of what he considers 'proper' adherence to the scriptures and the law. Thus, the second legislation of the Didascalia deserves more serious attention than it has received in the past. After a preliminary introduction to the text, the present chapter will present a detailed analysis of the second legislation. Following the exegesis of the text, the final portion of this chapter will offer some suggestions on how the second legislation argument contributed to the construction of Christian identity in third century Syria.

1.1. Background

The complete Didascalia Apostolorum survives only in a Syriac translation.⁷ Latin

(Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), especially chapter six: "Menstrual Politics in Early Christian Literature" (160-209).

⁵ It should be noted that this author found few sources that even discuss the Didascalia Apostolorum. It appears that the Didascalia is relevant only to the sources behind the Apostolic Constitutions, Jewish-Christianity, and feminist studies. Yet even within these specialized topics the Didascalia is not regularly featured.

⁶ Found primarily in chapter 26, this subject first arises in the opening chapter and appears often throughout the other 25 chapters.

⁷ Paul de Lagarde, *Didascalia Apostolorum Syriace* (Paris, 1854); Margaret Dunlop Gibson, *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac* (Cambridge: C.J. Clay and Sons, 1903); Arthur Vööbus, *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac* (found in *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* 1979 vols. 401, 402, 407, 408). German and French editions were prepared by H. Achelis and J. Flemming's *Die syrische Didaskalia* (Tübingen, 1904) and F. Nau's *La Didascalie des douze Apôtres* (Paris, 1912), respectively. A commonly used English translation is R.H. Connolly's *Didascalia Apostolorum: The Syriac Version Translated and accompanied by the Verona Latin Fragments* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929). Connolly's translation of the *Didascalia* includes extensive notes regarding the nature of the text, not to mention detailed history of the available

fragments also exist, although they cover less than half of the text including the beginning and end.⁸ The best version of the Didascalia might be one reconstructed using both Syriac and Latin editions, though it is not necessarily the original version of the text,⁹ which appears to have been Greek. Although problematic, it may be possible to reconstruct a Greek version of the Didascalia using the fourth-century *Apostolic Constitutions* whose compiler, writing in Greek, drew on the *Didascalia Apostolorum* when writing his first six books.¹⁰

The compiler-editor of the *Apostolic Constitutions* composed his work toward the end of the fourth century, most likely in Syria.¹¹ The *Apostolic Constitutions* is comprised of a variety of sources: books 1 through 6 is an edited version of the *Didascalia Apostolorum*; 7.1-32 is an adaptation of the *Didache*; portions of book 8 are derived from Hippolytus.¹² In addition, the compiler adapted a number of Jewish prayers into his text.¹³ Of course, the Didascalist could not have been influenced by the *Constitutions*. However, the *Apostolic Constitutions* has served to continue the Didascalist's message, albeit in a somewhat altered form.

Since the *Apostolic Constitutions* is available in Greek, Funk attempted to recover the original (and now lost) Greek text of the *Didascalia*. However, as van Unnik notes, the author of the *Apostolic Constitutions* rearranges a large portion of the material adopted from the *Didascalia* while expanding other sections. Furthermore, the author also deletes seemingly

manuscripts. Other critical notes about the various *Didascalia* manuscripts can be found in the introduction of Vööbus' two English editions (vol. 401:8*-69* and vol. 402:5*-68*).

⁸ Edmund Hauler, *Didascalia Apostolorum fragmenta Veronensia latina* (Leipzig, 1900).

⁹ Connolly, *Didascalia*, xxiii.

¹⁰ For the Greek reconstruction, see Franciscus Xaverius Funk's *Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum* (Paderborn, 1905).

¹¹ Vööbus, *Didascalia* vol. 402, 30*-31*, n.45.

¹² Vööbus, *Didascalia* vol. 402, 30*. Fiensy, "Redaction History and the *Apostolic Constitutions*," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 72 n. 4 (April 1982), 294-302 (293). For a summary of the sources see H. Leclercq, "Constitutiones Apostoliques" in *Dictionaire d'Archeologie Chretienne et de Liturgie* (ed. F. Cabrol and H. Leclercq; Paris, 1914), III, 2, cols. 2735f.

¹³ For a thorough analysis of the history of scholarship on these Jewish prayers, see David Fiensy "Redaction History and the *Apostolic Constitutions*," 294-302.

unwanted passages of the *Didascalia*.¹⁴ Connolly warns that extrapolating a Greek version of the *Didascalia Apostolorum* from the available Greek of the *Apostolic Constitutions* is dubious since “the compiler of that work dealt so freely with his source, making perpetual additions, omissions, and alterations, that we can seldom feel sure that he has left a sentence exactly as he found it” (*Didascalia*, v. See also xx-xxi). Like van Unnik and Connolly, I am hesitant to accept a reconstruction of the Greek *Didascalia* from the *Apostolic Constitutions* due to the liberal redaction that has taken place. Therefore, I will focus on the available Syriac and Latin texts.

Connolly states that scholars generally locate the *Didascalia* in Syria or Palestine in the third century.¹⁵ Since authors such as Aphrahat and Ephrem appear to have known of our text, not to mention the text’s description of a baptism that was found also among Syrian churches, the positive role regarding women’s ministries (which is also found in the Syriac *Acts of Thomas*), there is good reason to consider Syria the place of composition, likely between Antioch and Edessa.¹⁶ Connolly dates the Syriac version earlier than the Latin edition, the latter of which he dates no later than 486. Connolly concludes that the Syriac translation happened between 300 and 330,¹⁷ although he does admit that scholarly opinions vary as to whether the text should be dated to the first or second half of the third-century.¹⁸ There is no indication that there was more

¹⁴ Van Unnik, “The Significance of Moses’ Law for the Church of Christ according to the Syriac *Didascalia*,” in *Sparsa Collecta: The Collected Essays of W.C. Van Unnik. Part Three* (Leiden: Brill, 1983), 7-39 (9). Van Unnik discusses the ways in which the author of the *Apostolic Constitutions* has distorted the *Didascalia* “to argue the exact opposite” (32). Furthermore, Vööbus (*Didascalia* vol. 402, 33*-67*) discusses the theological differences and subsequent textual emendations among the central manuscripts of the *Didascalia*.

¹⁵ Connolly, *Didascalia*, lxxxvii. However, only a few lines later Connolly investigates the accuracy of an early fourth century date. Connolly dates the now lost Greek version to the third century, before the Decian persecution and the Valerian’s prohibition against Christians using cemeteries for worship centers (xc-xci). He then dates the Syriac to the early fourth century, and finally the Latin version, now only available in fragments, to the late fourth century (see lxxxvii-xci). Connolly’s conclusions are maintained in Vööbus’ later edition (*Didascalia*, vol. 402, 27*-28*).

¹⁶ Connolly, *Didascalia*, lxxxvii-lxxxix.

¹⁷ Connolly, *Didascalia*, xvii-xvix. Van Unnik states, however, that the Syriac and Latin versions likely come from the fourth-century (“Moses’ Law,” 9).

¹⁸ Connolly, *Didascalia*, xxvi, lxxxix.

than one author of the text, though the possibility cannot be ruled out.¹⁹ Considering the clear interest in the description of bishops and their roles found within the Didascalia, the author may have been a bishop. In addition, the author addresses his colleagues as brothers.²⁰

1.2. The Meaning of *deuterosis*

The second legislation is a standard translation for *secundatio legis* in Latin, δευτέρωσις in Greek,²¹ or *tenyan namosa* (ܛܢܝܢܢܡܘܫܐ) in Syriac.²² A concise discussion of the use of the term *deuterosis* is found in Simon's *Verus Israel*.²³ Simon claims that the term is found among fourth century authors where it commonly refers to the Jewish oral tradition. It is the equivalent of παράδοσις and equated with the Mishnah.²⁴ A. Baumgarten has also investigated the term παράδοσις, concluding that the Pharisees used the term to bolster the prestige of their own traditions in the face of religious competition.²⁵ He argues that παράδοσις is “a technical

¹⁹ Van Unnik, “Moses’ Law,” 11.

²⁰ Metzger, “The Didascalia and the Constitutiones Apostolorum,” in *The Eucharist of the Early Christians* (ed. Willy Rordorf et.al.; trans. Matthew J. O’Connell; New York: Pueblo Publishing Co., 1978), 194-219 (194, n. 2).

²¹ The Greek is taken from corresponding parallels in the Apostolic Constitutions.

²² Connolly suggests that the Greek word δευτέρωσις confused the Latin translator of the Didascalia who does not present it consistently early in the text. On page 13 line 14 of Connolly’s edition he notes that the term is ignored; page 13 line 17 contains only “δευτέρωσ”; page 13 line 20 has *secunda legatio* and *repetita alligatio* (which Connolly repairs to *legatio*); page 15 line 7 contains *secundatio legis*. The remaining occurrences in the document use the abbreviated term *secundatio* in place of δευτέρωσις.

²³ Simon, *Verus Israel*, 88-89.

²⁴ Simon, *Verus Israel*, 89.

²⁵ Albert Baumgarten, “The Pharisaic *Paradosis*,” *Harvard Theological Review* 80 (1987): 63-77 (77). Baumgarten suggests that the term had several different meanings in Josephus’ work (64ff.) which may indicate, in his view, a larger phenomenon at work in the first century. The term apparently underwent alteration in how it was used in culture. Baumgarten later implies that the change may have occurred as a result of religious competition (70ff.) for the ultimate goal of winning Jews to their cause (76-77). My own work in this dissertation hopes to mirror, in a way, Baumgarten’s type of examination conducted on *paradosis* and its role in identity construction,

a region where there was close contact with Jews, the use of *deuterosis* was a purposeful choice.³¹ The rabbis presented the *deuterosis* as laws that had been divinely dispensed to Moses on Sinai. The Didascalist does not challenge the claim that the *deuterosis* was instituted by the divine. However, he does employ the same *deuterosis* term to demote the Jewish traditions in the eyes of his own community by explaining the ‘true’ function of the ritual laws as a form of divine punishment. By appropriating the *deuterosis* term for his own reasons, the Didascalist argues for the invalidation of a significant portion of Jewish tradition.³²

Connolly claims that the meaning of *deuterosis* as secondary legislation was “fixed and clear before the end of the fourth century A.D.”³³ In support of this claim, he supplies a list of patristic authors such as Jerome, Epiphanius, Augustine, and Eusebius who use derivatives of δευτέρω in their works when referring to some type of secondary transmission of religious law. At the same time, however, Connolly observes that the Didascalist reconfigures the meaning of *deuterosis* to indicate not the “‘traditions of the elders’, whether oral or written, but rather the corpus of ceremonial legislation of the Pentateuch: sacrifices, the Sabbath, circumcision, clean and unclean animals, ceremonial defilement and purification.”³⁴ Both of these interpretations prove valid. Yet, Connolly and others have not provided an explanation for the term *deuterosis* that includes the way it is utilized in the Didascalia. In the text, the *deuterosis*, or second legislation, refers to those laws deemed secondary in the sense of inauthentic and false, not simply as a revised version of the initial dispensation.

2. Analysis of the Second Legislation

The Didascalia explains that God dispensed the law in various stages. According to the text, the majority of the laws in the scriptures are temporary punishments from God, a result of the idolatrous action of the ancient Israelites. Freedom from these laws arrives with the manifestation of Christ. In order to understand fully the false scripture argument as it appears within the Didascalia, this chapter will investigate the text’s description of the original law, the

³¹ A notion also supported in the various works of H. Drijvers as well as G. Strecker (“On the Problem of Jewish Christianity,” 251).

³² Simon, *Verus Israel*, 89-90.

³³ Connolly, *Didascalia*, lviii.

³⁴ Connolly, *Didascalia*, lix.

secondary legislation, and the role of Christ. The second portion of this chapter, then, is an investigation of those passages of the Didascalia that relate to the notion of secondary law, with the eventual goal of detailing how the author of the Didascalia used a form of the false scripture rhetoric to construct and maintain a sense of Christian identity among the community.

2.1. The Original Law

A key aspect of communal identity in the Didascalia is the proper discernment of the pure and authentic law of God from the second legislation – that is, those laws that function as a punishment for the People. Given the importance placed on this issue of the second legislation throughout the Didascalia, identifying the pure law is necessary to understand the Didascalia’s construction of Christian identity.

The Didascalia frequently describes or associates the law with the Decalogue.³⁵ Elsewhere within the Didascalia, the law is described also as the “commandments and the judgments” (*decalogus et iudicia*; Connolly, *Didascalia*, 15; ܠܘܝܢ ܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ; DA 2, CSCO 402:15 [401:18]). The commandments are the Ten Words (DA 26, CSCO 408:224); that is, the commandments or laws dispensed to Moses at Mt. Sinai (DA 23, CSCO 408:204-205). The Decalogue comprises the laws God intended to give humanity. The Didascalist explains that these statutes were not designed to be taxing to the People; “So then the Law is easy and light” (DA 26, CSCO 408:226).³⁶

On the other hand, the judgments are the statutes of the second legislation. As will be discussed below, the Didascalia explains that the second legislation was a judgment, or penalty, upon the Israelites for worshipping the golden calf. In this way, the Didascalia organizes all of the laws of scripture within one of two polarized groupings: original law and second

³⁵ The Didascalia’s description of the pure law of God being the Ten Commandments parallels *Ptolemy’s Letter to Flora* which, as discussed in the previous chapter, considers the Decalogue to be the only portion of the Mosaic law to be provided by the perfect god.

³⁶ *Haec ergo simplex et leuis et facillima lex est* (Connolly, *Didascalia*, 221); ܠܘܝܢ ܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ, ܡܘܨܝܐ...ܠܘܝܢ ܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ (CSCO 407:244).

legislation.³⁷ Only the Ten Commandments are considered authentic since they alone are God’s original mandates. The remainder of the laws are considered parts of the second legislation.³⁸

The Didascalia suggests that the each member of the believing community should strive to realize and follow only the original portions of the simple law. “But for those men who obey God there is one law, simple and true and pleasant³⁹ – which without question (is valid) for Christians – (namely) this, that ‘anything you hate that it should happen to you through another, do not do to another’” (DA 1, *CSCO* 402:11). One aspect of the Didascalia’s rhetorical strategy was to foster a more simplified religious life for the community.⁴⁰ The ability to differentiate between the original law and the second legislation is the specific duty of bishops (DA 4, *CSCO* 402:47).

According to the Didascalia, there is confirmation in the Hebrew Bible to support this explanation of the original law. For example, the Didascalist cites Malachi 4:6 as support for his depiction of the authentic law of God: “Remember the law of Moses the servant of the Lord, as he commanded you commandments and judgments” (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:224). In addition, Ezekiel 20:25-26 states “Moreover, I gave them laws that were not good and rules by which they could not live: When they set aside every first issue of the womb, I defiled them by their very

³⁷ The Didascalist’s categorization of the laws is less similar to that of Ptolemy. Ptolemy does not specifically discuss the chronology of the dispensation(s) but focuses Flora’s attention on the idea that the laws established by Moses and the elders are not on par with the laws of the demiurge. However, as the next chapter will demonstrate, the *Homilies* does present the idea that the false passages were interpolated into the scriptures, apparently after the law had been received and then written.

³⁸ Robert Grant’s article, “The Decalogue in Early Christianity,” *Harvard Theological Review* 40 n.1 (January 1947): 1-17, discusses the elevation of the Decalogue in Christian circles and its apparent decline in rabbinic Judaism. Grant concludes that the increase among Christians was due to Paul’s teaching that “the law of nature and the Law of God were essentially the same” (16).

³⁹ לחייב גַּם אֶת־הַיְהוּדִים לְעִוְלָה וְלַחֲטָאִים וְלַחֲטָאִים וְלַחֲטָאִים : אֵין מִן־הַיְהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִשְׁמְרוּ אֶת־הַתּוֹרָה (CSCO 401:13).

⁴⁰ The rhetorical function of the deuterosis argument indicates that the Didascalist intends to purge and simplify the contemporary religious activities of his community. A full discussion of the rhetoric of the Didascalia is found below.

gifts – that I might render them desolate, that they might know that I am the Lord.”⁴¹ These passages appear to have fueled the author’s hermeneutical approach toward the scriptures.

The authentic words of God are contained not only in the scriptures but also in the New Testament. In fact, the Didascalia presents the accounts of Christ from early Christian writings as a way to discern the original law from the second legislation. The Didascalist states that the simple law corresponds to the gospel, the Prophets, and the book of Kings (DA 2, *CSCO* 402:15). Although not directly defined in the text, the use of the term gospel appears to indicate a familiarity with gospel literature. Although a preference for the Gospel of Matthew is evident, the author cites passages from each of the gospels presently accepted as canonical as well as non-canonical ones like the Gospel of Peter.⁴² According to the Didascalist, a comparison of the law and the prophets with the gospel demonstrates that they are in harmony (DA 4, *CSCO* 402:34). Furthermore, any writings that are contrary to these ‘acceptable’ sources are to be avoided (DA 2, *CSCO* 402:14, 15).

It is of some interest that other legal texts are considered acceptable to this author since he has identified the teachings of the Decalogue as the original law. Yet, it seems the case that other writings are authentic and useful. One reason for this allowance could be that the writings the Didascalist indicates do not contain the various mandates of the second legislation. These inauthentic teachings are commonly found in Deuteronomy and Leviticus. The author clearly does not encourage a rejection of the Jewish history or prophecy of the scriptures but instead only the penalties of the second legislation.

“The Law thus consists of the ten sayings and the judgments, these which God spoke before that the people made the calf and worshipped idols” (DA 26, *CSCO* 408: 26.218.18-20). It is not long, however, before the simple law of God becomes complicated with the addition of a secondary set of statutes. As the Didascalist explains, the first law was given by God before the People had made the calf and served idols (DA 2, *CSCO* 402:15). As Moses descends from Sinai, he encounters the Israelites worshipping a golden calf (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:226). The

⁴¹ For an in-depth evaluation of the significance of this verse in early Christian interpretation, see Scott Walker Hahn and John Sietze Bergsma, “What Laws Were ‘Not Good’? A Canonical Approach to the Theological Problem of Ezekiel 20:25-26,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 123/2 (2004): 201-218.

⁴² Strecker, “On the Problem of Jewish Christianity,” 247-8.

People denied God even after he guided and protected them during the exodus. As a punishment, God enacts the second legislation upon the People for their disloyal and idolatrous action. The second legislation was added after the Law was provided to Moses as a punishment for the golden calf event.

2.2. The Second Legislation

Although the original law is considered light and easy, the second legislation is a burden, described in terms of a “yoke”⁴³ (e.g. DA 26, *CSCO* 408:231, 232).⁴⁴ According to Connolly, “‘the Law’ is defined to be the Decalogue and ‘the Judgements’, while the *Deuterosis* embraces the whole ceremonial legislation of the Old Testament.”⁴⁵ Both the pure law and the second legislation are the words of God. However, the original law is permanent while the statutes of the second legislation are merely temporary (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:222-225). These mandates are temporary because God established them as a punishment that eventually would be lifted by the arrival of Christ. In this sense, the second legislation of the Didascalia deserves to be grouped with *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora* and the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*.

As stated above, the Didascalia considers the golden calf incident to be the direct cause for the second legislation (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:228).⁴⁶ The Didascalia is one of many writings to employ the golden calf event as part of a rhetorical scheme designed as a polemic against Jewish

⁴³ רָבָוּ (CSCO 407:249).

⁴⁴ A usage derived from Psalm 2:3: “Let us burst their bonds asunder, and cast their cords from us.”

⁴⁵ Connolly, *Didascalia*, xxxiv.

⁴⁶ Studies on the significance of the golden calf event in Jewish and Christian traditions include Pier Cesare Bori's *The Golden Calf and the Origins of the anti-Jewish Controversy* (trans. David Ward; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990); Brevard S. Childs' *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), 553ff.; and I.J. Mandelbaum's “Tannaitic Exegesis of the Golden Calf Episode” (in *A Tribute to Geza Vermes: Essays on Jewish and Christian Literature and History* (ed. P.R. Davies and R.T. White; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 207-233. However, none of these works discuss the notion of inauthentic scripture in relation to the golden calf event as expressed in the Didascalia.

practices.⁴⁷ According to the Didascalia, the second legislation was instituted on account of idolatry (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:233). At one point, the author refers to the second legislation as “the idolatry of the calf” (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:242).⁴⁸

The Didascalist states that it was God who instituted the second legislation upon the People as a penalty for idolatry. It is “our Lord and Savior Himself, who gave the Law and the second legislation” (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:230). These mandates were then delivered by Moses (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:232). However, the Didascalist also notes that it is Satan, not God, who is the source of wrath (DA 10, *CSCO* 402:111). Evil desires derive from the evil one⁴⁹ (DA 1, *CSCO* 402:10). Anyone who involves himself with the second legislation is considered condemned by the Didascalist.

Just as the author employs biblical passages to validate his ideas about the original and authentic law, he also sifts through the scriptures for textual evidence that God established laws of punishment. For example, the Didascalist uses Ezekiel 20:25 (“Moreover I gave them statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they could not live”) as a kind of hermeneutical proof to explain that there are elements of the law that were intended as a punishment or curse (DA 26, *CSCO* 408: 231-232).

The Didascalist warns his audience against obeying the second legislation (DA 2, *CSCO* 402:15). The Didascalia relates that those who are righteous are blessed because they follow the law, but those who are wicked are considered so because they do not keep the law. Instead, the wicked follow something other than the law (i.e., the second legislation) (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:230-231). Christians must avoid the festivals and songs of the heathen and have no involvement with the laws and doctrines of strange assemblies, so that the name of an idol is not

⁴⁷ Other works and authors cited in Bori’s article include *Epistle of Barnabas*, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Irenaeus, John Chrysostom, and Ephrem. However, the Didascalia’s use of the golden calf event is unique since others do not refer to the establishment of inauthentic laws as a divine punishment for the Israelites’ disobedience. As argued here, the Didascalist’s tactic in describing the false elements of scripture, that is, the second legislation, is to construct a sense of group identity that will distinguish his community from all others – Jewish or Christian.

⁴⁸ *Utuli idololatriam* (Connolly, *Didascalia*, 251); חַלְבַּת הַבַּיִת (DA 26, *CSCO* 407:260).

⁴⁹ *maligno* (Connolly, *Didascalia*, 4); מַלְאָכָא (DA 1, *CSCO* 401:12).

mistakenly mentioned by one of “the faithful”⁵⁰ (DA 21, *CSCO* 408:185). Elsewhere, the Didascalist explains that “it is not lawful for a believer to swear” by the elements of the heavens or the earth or to mention the name of idols. Instead, believers are only to speak blessings from the “divine Scriptures”⁵¹ (DA 21, *CSCO* 408:188). Furthermore, those who participate in the second legislation are hated by God. “Moreover, if you do these things, your soul shall be in want of life, and you shall be despised before the Lord God. Therefore as a man who wants to please God, take heed that you do no such (things) as these, and depart far from all those things which the Lord hates” (DA 2, *CSCO* 402:14). In addition, the Didascalia states that those who transgress the law are associated with the heathen, those who deny God, and those who do not serve God – all of whom will be destroyed in fire for their disbelief (DA 20, *CSCO* 408:179).

For these reasons, the author advises his audience to learn to distinguish the authentic portions of the Law from the now muted mandates of the second legislation (DA 2, *CSCO* 402:15, 20). The church authorities, namely the bishops, supply this information. A bishop’s primary duty is to discriminate the second legislation from “the law of the faithful,”⁵² and thereby guide his flock away from the bonds of the second legislation (DA 4, *CSCO* 402:4.34.23-29).⁵³ Being able to discern the original law of God and avoid the second legislation directly affects the development of one’s faith (DA 2, *CSCO* 402:16).

Chapter 24 includes a telescoping of Acts 15 and Acts 10 into a single account. As in Acts, the stories in the Didascalia are designed to address the concerns of Gentile conversion.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ כַּלְמַתֵּי הַשָּׁמַיִם (CSCO 407:204).

⁵¹ כַּלְמַתֵּי הַשָּׁמַיִם (CSCO 407:205).

⁵² כַּלְמַתֵּי הַשָּׁמַיִם (CSCO 401:56).

⁵³ Since the Didascalia emphasizes both the need to avoid the second legislation as well as the important role of bishops in distinguishing the original law from the second legislation, many scholars argue that the author of the Didascalia was a bishop. The Didascalia’s emphasis on the authoritative transmission of “authentic” teaching that eclipses false passages is also found in the Pseudo-Clementines where Peter is the conduit for Christ’s teaching on the true and false passages (see chapter four).

⁵⁴ It is perhaps here where the reasoning for setting the text in the context of the disciples’ early meetings becomes most clear. The Didascalia, like Acts, is interested in dictating the boundaries of group identity: what converts must do to enjoy the privileged status of group membership.

At the end, “Peter” rhetorically asks, “If now our Lord has loosed and lightened from us (such burdens), why will you lay a noose upon your own selves?” (DA 24, *CSCO* 408:217). The answer does not need to be written. Members must avoid the burden of the second legislation and ignore its precepts.

Since the second legislation has been removed, members are no longer “bound by sacrifices, by sacrificial offerings, by sin offerings, by purifications, by vows, by gifts, by holocausts, by burnt offerings, by (Sabbath) idlings, by showbread, and by the observations of purifications...” (DA 9, *CSCO* 402:108).

2.2.1. The charge of idolatry

Idolatry is a central target of the Didascalia’s polemic. This rhetorical strategy effectively kills two birds with one stone for the author. The charge of idolatry can obviously be laid at the feet of those Gentiles who have come to Christianity from other religions where other gods were worshipped. By attacking the practice of idolatry, the author can guard against what he must have perceived as the backsliding of Gentile Christians to their previous ways. On the other hand, the Didascalist has also charged Jews (“the People”) with idolatry on account of the golden calf incident. Idolatry is the most obvious concern for the author since the golden calf incident, an act of idolatry, incurred punishment from God in the form of the second legislation. Just as the Jerusalem council of Acts 15 was concerned with the inclusion of Jewish identity markers in the early Christian movement, the Didascalia (which claims its setting in the Jerusalem council) is concerned with discerning the authentic and true law of God from those which no longer need to be observed.

It is possible to read the Didascalist’s charge of idolatry upon the people as part of his rhetorical strategy to downplay the interest in other religious writings within his congregation. The author is clearly aware of such religious curiosity. He instructs his community that if they are interested in history they should read the Book of Kings, in wisdom then read the prophets, in songs then read the Psalms of David, in cosmogony then read Genesis, and if the law of God then read Exodus (DA 2, *CSCO* 402:14-15). It is safe, then, to assume that there were those in the community who did not consider those writings, or portions of writings, deemed acceptable by the author of the Didascalia. According to the Didascalist, “there is no sin worse than

idolatry”⁵⁵ (DA 7, *CSCO* 402:88). The charge of idolatry has been rhetorically transferred from the participants of the golden calf event at Sinai to members of the community who have entertained non-biblical religious and historical ideas.

It is especially poignant that the Didascalist promotes the Book of Kings. The various kings accounted for in the Hebrew Bible are judged according to whether or not they were faithful to God. According to our author, “those kings who went aside from God and served idols did justly, through a severe judgment, perish wretchedly and were deprived of the kingdom of God, and instead of rest are tormented” (DA 2, *CSCO* 402:16). The Didascalist relies upon the account in Kings to demonstrate God’s intolerance of idolatry and the recognition of those who reject it. In effect, the Book of Kings functions as an educational device for the author to impress upon his audience the importance of rejecting idolatry. Once again, the issue of idolatry, especially as applied to those of the biblical past, is critical to this author and his maintenance of group identity.

Idolatry and the second legislation are closely connected. The second legislation was brought about due to the acts of idolatry by the Israelites at the base of Mt. Sinai. It was this act that fueled God’s judgment and elicited the addendum of the second legislation to the original, simple law. Therefore, the numerous polemical statements against idolatry (and perhaps adultery as well, since the lack of monogamy may reflect the disloyalty to a single love) found throughout the Didascalia could also be a reflection of the central issue of *deuterosis*.

2.2.2. *Elements of the second legislation*

As discussed above, the Didascalia claims that God burdened the People with the second legislation, a set of laws considerably harsher and more complicated than the original light law of the Decalogue. Throughout the text the author elucidates the penalties he considers part of the second legislation. They include burnt offerings, abstaining or distinguishing meats from clean and unclean animals, purifications, baptisms, sprinklings, sacrifices, offerings, oblations, showbread, scapegoats, vows, “and many other amazing things” (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:227). Elsewhere, the Didascalist adds the distinction of meats and incense (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:225).

⁵⁵ לַאֲשֶׁר הָיָה לָהֶם לְעִלְמוֹת הַבְּרִיָּה הַזֹּאת (CSCO 401:92).

The various elements of the second legislation can be verified, according to the Didascalist, by comparing these mandates with the life and ministry of Christ. At no point in the gospels does Jesus overtly engage in any of these practices. Recall that the Didascalia claims it is the verdict of the Jerusalem council of Acts 15 and Galatians 2. “Literarily...the Didascalia locates itself in the conflict of the mid-first century. It re-inscribes that earlier conflict into its own contemporary conflict.”⁵⁶ However, the Didascalia replaces the focus on circumcision from the accounts of Acts and Galatians with the Sabbath and purity issues.⁵⁷

The Didascalia especially targets sacrifice and burnt offerings as part of the second legislation (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:225, 229). The Didascalia explains that God employed the Romans to overthrow the temple and eradicate sacrifice and all other aspects of the second legislation, such as libations and sprinklings. According to the Didascalist, the Romans obey the law – a law that parallels the law of God – but they reject any aspect of what the author considers part of the second legislation. The Didascalia considers the Romans to hold such extensive earthly power since they adhere to God’s original law (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:236). The Romans perform God’s will on earth by preventing the observance of elements of the second legislation.

The absence of the Jerusalem temple in the third century must have served as proof for this interpretation. Although the temple is not directly mentioned anywhere in the Didascalia, the rituals associated with the temple cult, such as sacrifice, libations, and burnt offerings, are specifically targeted by the author’s polemic.

Circumcision is a complex subject in the Didascalia since the practice represents part of a covenant established between Abraham and God (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:225). The author must offer a creative means of interpretation to explain why the scriptures require the act while at the same time accounting for a lack of any written reference to Jesus’ circumcision in the gospels. The Didascalist states that God did not impose circumcision but foresaw its eventual establishment upon the People. The author explains that passages such as Exodus 20:24ff and Deuteronomy 27:5, seemingly about the iron tools used in sacrifice, are actually references to circumcision. Furthermore, these passages are not commands from God but rather conditional statements (“if you will make an altar...”). Therefore, any passages in the scriptures that appear to indicate God’s command to circumcise have been misunderstood, according to the Didascalist (DA 26,

⁵⁶ Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity*, 171.

⁵⁷ Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity*, 172.

CSCO 408:225-225). It was only after the golden calf incident that God commanded the practice of circumcision entailed in the second legislation (DA 26, CSCO 408:226-227).

The practice of baptism within the Didascalia is a hazy subject since it is both accepted and rejected. On the one hand, baptism is listed among other elements of the second legislation (DA 26, CSCO 408:227). David Aune has suggested that the rite of baptism among Jews and Christians was never fully rejected; instead, the practice was altered according to a community's understanding of the rite.⁵⁸ Although Aune's observation was not overtly in reference to the Didascalia, this statement holds true for this text, since the rite of baptism is at once rejected and upheld by this author. Baptism appears within the list of ceremonial mandates included in the second legislation, but it is also maintained as a rite of entrance into the holy community.

More often in the text, however, baptism serves a critical function as a rite of passage into the believing community. Baptism is a key element of the religious life of the Didascalist's community.⁵⁹ That it is a prized sacrament is evident in that women – including deaconesses and widows – were not allowed to confer it, except in special circumstances and even then only to other women (DA 15, CSCO 408:151). The author explains that baptism frees members of the community from the idolatry which brought about the second legislation (DA 26, CSCO 408:228). The Didascalist contends that those already baptized will not backslide to their former ways of “heresy”⁶⁰ like “the abominable and filthy works of the ungodly heathen”; to do so condemns oneself to the fire of Gehenna (DA 5, CSCO 402:50). Anyone who believes and is baptized has any previous sins forgiven. Furthermore, any post-baptismal sins are expunged also, except for “a deadly sin” (DA 20, CSCO 408:183-184). One baptism is enough for community members (DA 24, CSCO 408:215).

⁵⁸ David Aune, “The Phenomenon of Early Christian ‘Anti-Sacramentalism,’” in *Studies in New Testament and Early Christian Literature: Essays in Honor of Allen P. Wikgren* (ed. by David Edward Aune; Leiden: Brill, 1972), 194-214 (213).

⁵⁹ Connolly (xliv-l) notes that the Syriac *Acts of Judas Thomas*, which, like the Didascalia, has been located to third-century Syria, also includes significant accounts of baptism. This commonality may suggest a regional importance of the sacrament of baptism. I would also point out that baptism is prominent also within the Pseudo-Clementines which are third or early fourth century writings from Syria.

⁶⁰ *heresis* (Connolly, *Didascalia*, 39); ܢܘܩܕܝܢܐ (CSCO 401:59).

Fasting is also mentioned in the text. The Didascalist advises his audience not to fast “according to the custom of the former people, but according to the new covenant⁶¹ which I have set up to you...” (DA 21, *CSCO* 408:191). Essentially, the argument revolves around which day of the week is acceptable for fasting. Using an obscure reference to Zechariah 8:19 (“the fourth fast, the fifth fast”), the author explains that the act of fasting should not mirror that of the former People even if they fast on the same day as the Jews. The Didascalist explains that community members are required to observe the fast on Friday and the Sabbath, the reading of scriptures, prayer and intercession for those not saved, oblations, and the belief in the resurrection of Jesus (DA 21, *CSCO* 408:199). The Didascalist relays that his community should fast on behalf of those who have not converted. The Gentiles, who have been delivered from their idolatry, are instructed to pray on behalf of the People due to the “error and destruction” brought about by their disobedience (DA 21, *CSCO* 408: 192).

The Didascalia community celebrates the Passover/Easter, although apparently there is debate as to when the event should take place. The Didascalist explains how his community’s Pascha should be celebrated at a different date from that of the people (DA 21, *CSCO* 408:198-199). The various rules of the Pascha are beyond the scope of this project. However, in terms of group identity, there is some relevance. After an extended discussion that spans most of chapter twenty-one, the Didascalist strongly reiterates his expectations to the audience, “you Christians”⁶² (DA 21, *CSCO* 408:202). In my estimation, this statement is a step in setting parameters on the community’s borders. Once again, those who are Christians are markedly different from others by the manner of their religious activities. Performing the proper acts and knowing the supposedly correct beliefs preserves one’s place within the community of the faithful. In order to remain within the boundaries stated in the Didascalia, it is crucial to distinguish the authentic laws from the temporary ones.

Also, the Sabbath is attacked as a temporary punishment from God. The Didascalist discusses how the notion of a Sabbath is foreign to the observable universe. The reason provided in the Didascalia is that God and the universe were never idle one day a week but are continually

⁶¹ ܠܗܘܢ ܠܥܘܠܡܢܐ (CSCO 407:208). “Covenant” also can be translated as “testament.”

⁶² ܕܡܫܝܚܐ... ܕܡܫܝܚܐ (CSCO 407:218).

in motion. Even the actions of the patriarchs demonstrate that there is no need to adhere to the Sabbath since they were never idle one day a week (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:235).

That the author includes the Sabbath along with the other portions of the second legislation is interesting since it is mandated in the fourth commandment of the Decalogue. As discussed above, the author considers the Decalogue to be the original and authentic law of God. Therefore, our author must find a creative solution to a self-made problem. The author explains that the Sabbath is not part of the second legislation; instead, it is the myriad of religious considerations involved in observing the Sabbath that relate to the second legislation. These complicated statutes include kindling light, bathing, preparing a table, working, speaking, or reading the scriptures. The Didascalist associates this activity with mourning rather than a regular religious observance (DA 21, *CSCO* 408:200-201). The Sabbath, claims the author, should be understood as a type of final rest, apparently a reference to the end of time (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:236).

The Didascalia clearly targets rites of purification after sexual intercourse as well as menstruation as elements of the second legislation. The text has explained that those who observe the purity laws of the second legislation do so out of ignorance. The author reminds his audience that those who have received baptism are free from separating themselves for reasons of natural issues or sexual intercourse (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:238). He argues that a woman does not need to refrain from prayer, reading the scriptures, or the Eucharist on account of menstruation since she is already sanctified (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:239).⁶³ The author mocks the purity regulations by claiming that those who observe this aspect of the second legislation would need constant baptisms from sexual intercourse or entering a tomb, or would be forever washing their clothes and their feet since clothing and shoes are made from dead animals (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:242, 244-245).

2.2.3. Another layer of the second legislation

As the above discussion has demonstrated, the bonds of the second legislation are quite extensive. The complicated religious life of the People was a punishment from God for the

⁶³ For a detailed discussion on women and purity issues in the Didascalia, see Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity*, 160-209.

idolatry of the golden calf. However, the more complicated religious life mandated by the various elements of the second legislation was too much, says the Didascalia, for the People to maintain. For a second time, the People provoked God's anger, resulting in the establishment of another layer of the second legislation curse (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:227). The curse is now found in Deuteronomy 21:22-23. 'When someone is convicted of a crime punishable by death and is executed, and you hang him on a tree, his corpse must not remain all night upon the tree; you shall bury him that same day, for anyone hung on a tree is under God's curse.'⁶⁴

According to the Didascalia, the purpose of God's act was to blind the People and thereby prevent them from recognizing Christ when he arrived. As will be discussed below, Christ's arrival marks a pivotal event when the bonds of the second legislation would be lifted. The People, mistakenly rejecting Christ due to God's latest punishment, would refuse to adhere to Christ's teaching that the various ingredients that comprised the second legislation are no longer binding (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:232).

The Didascalia also mentions that anyone who maintains the second legislation upholds a curse on Christ. In doing so, that one becomes "an enemy of the Lord God" (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:233). Anyone who maintains even one aspect of the second legislation confirms the curse upon Christ. He or she is guilty of the idolatry which engendered the second legislation in the first place.

Judith Lieu observes that Deut 21:22-23 has implications for the construction of communal identity, specifically in the way that groups vie for control of the scriptures. The claim to the scriptures is a powerful tool in the appropriation of the 'correct' means to interpret and practice the laws of God. This discussion is part of the larger debate over scriptural authority between various Jewish and Christian groups. She raises the question of "whether there can be *Scriptures* without a community, and if the Scriptures should properly define the community, does not the community also define the scriptures?"⁶⁵ This question surely pertains to the

⁶⁴ A history of interpretation on Deut 21:22-23 is found in Judith Lieu's "Reading Canon and Community: Deuteronomy 21:22-23, A Test Case for Dialogue," in *The Bible in Human Society: Essays in Honour of John Rogerson* (ed. D. Carroll, D. Clines, and P. Davies; Sheffield, England: Sheffield, 1995), 317-334, and Max Wilcox's "'Upon the Tree' – Deut 21:22-23 in the New Testament," *JBL* 96 (1977): 85-99.

⁶⁵ Lieu, "Reading in Canon and Community," 320.

motivation and content of the Didascalia, a text that attempts to distinguish the authentic and eternal portions of scripture from the penalizing and temporary ones.

The introduction of a second curse upon the People is important for the Didascalia's construction of religious identity. On the one hand, this explanation corresponds to the historical situation of both the imagined context of the Didascalia (the Jerusalem Council) as well as that of the author (third century Syria). In each setting, there are Jews who refuse to accept Jesus as the Christ and continue to practice the Judaism of the day. On a rhetorical level, the second curse brands Jews (the People) as blind and ignorant. The Didascalist explains that these designations are applied by God. The Didascalist crafts an implicit argument that only those who are at odds with God and the original law would reject Christ. In order to define social boundaries, the Didascalia emphasizes the paradoxical nature of Deuteronomy 21:22-23 as one tactic in his attempt to engender a specific set of beliefs within the community. As for those already within the community, anyone who wants to be on the side of God will reject the ways of the second legislation as well as the biases the Jews insist on maintaining.

2.3. The Role of Christ

The role of Christ in the Didascalia is a pivotal part of the argument of inauthentic scripture.⁶⁶ According to the Didascalia, the purpose of Christ's arrival was to nullify the elements of the *deuterosis* and fulfill only the moral law of the Decalogue. "For our savior came for no other reason than to fulfill the Law, and to loosen us from the bonds of the second legislation"⁶⁷ (DA 2, *CSCO* 402:15). The second legislation has been removed on account of God's mercy (DA 9, *CSCO* 408:107). "However, the Lord our Savior, when He came, fulfilled the similies and explained the parables, and He showed those things that are lifegiving, and those that cannot help he abolished, and those that cannot give life He abrogated" (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:236).

⁶⁶ Christ's relationship to the Hebrew Bible in the Didascalia is the subject of van Unnik's article, "Moses' Law." More specifically, van Unnik explains that this issue relates to the larger question of the significance of the Mosaic Law within the Church of Christ (8).

⁶⁷ *nam saluator noster propter nihil aliud uenit, nisi ut legem inpleat et uincula secundationis legis infirmaret* (Connolly, *Didascalia*, 15); אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בְּבִרְיָתוֹ לְעַמּוּדָא דְּיִשְׂרָאֵל (CSCO 401:18).

The means by which Christ provides salvation is unknown. Van Unnik perceptively observes that the Didascalia does not clearly indicate the way in which Christ has abolished the second legislation; there is no mention of the cross.⁶⁸ Perhaps an argument could be made that since Christ, according to the gospels, never participated in any portion of the second legislation then his followers are free from its obligation as well. Still, the author is less than obvious in making this argument.

Nevertheless, what remains clear is the Didascalist's assurance that Christ arrived to confirm the original law. Christ's connection with the Decalogue is evident even in his name. Jesus gave a simple a pure law, namely the Decalogue that is associated with his name. The Didascalist explains that the letter iota represents ten, that is, the Ten Commandments (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:223). For the author, this is no coincidence but has fundamental implications: just as the authentic law is associated with Jesus, the community follows the teachings of Jesus. This amounts to an implicit validation of the regulations of the Didascalia community as the true law of God.

Throughout the text, the author weaves passages from the Hebrew Bible alongside Christian writings to illustrate how the authentic laws of God as found in the former are confirmed by the words of Christ recorded in the latter. There is a harmony in the teachings of the scriptures and the Christian writings, possibly indicating that the author considers certain Christian texts equally authoritative as the Hebrew Bible. Christ's negation of the second legislation can be found in the predictions of the prophets (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:227-228). Jesus' role is not to negate the entire Mosaic law but instead to purge the second legislation from God's simple and true law. The Gospel of Matthew 5:17 is marshaled in defense of Jesus' actions (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:225). "For in the Gospel he renewed and fulfilled and affirmed the Law; but the second legislation he did away and abolished" (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:228). There is no need to follow the statutes of the second legislation any longer as Christ himself has demonstrated. The Didascalia observes that Christ never participated in sprinklings, baptisms, sacrifices, burnt offerings, or "any thing that is written in the second legislation to offer" (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:230). The Didascalia informs the audience that the purpose of Christ's arrival was to "affirm the law, and abolish the second legislation, and fulfill the power of men's liberty, and show forth the resurrection of the dead" (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:228).

⁶⁸ Van Unnik, "Moses' Law," 19.

When reading the scriptures, the audience must recall that the bonds of the second legislation have been removed by God, thus nullifying the need to obey its statutes (DA 2, *CSCO* 402:15, 227). Those who insist on maintaining the second legislation, such as purity issues (“by reason of natural fluxes and the intercourse of marriage”⁶⁹ knowingly keep themselves from prayer, receiving the Eucharist, or reading the scriptures (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:238).⁷⁰ Yet the second legislation is responsible for implementing these limitations; therefore, they can be ignored. “On this account, beloved, flee and stay away from such observances, those which are such. Indeed, you have received release – you should no more bind yourselves. And do not load yourselves again with something which our Lord and Savior has taken away from you” (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:243).

3. The Didascalia, the Second Legislation, and Christian Identity

Throughout the above analysis of the second legislation in the Didascalia, I have made certain observations regarding how the text uses a rhetorical strategy of inauthentic scripture to construct social identity. Yet there are other issues of identity that have not been raised, such as the description of the People, Gentiles, and Christians. These labels offer a unique opportunity within my overall project since neither *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora* nor the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* employ them. In addition, this chapter must identify the intended audience and implied target of the Didascalia's polemic. If the second legislation serves to construct identity in opposition to another group, as I argue here, then what is the description of that other group, if one exists at all? These remaining concerns are vital to this work and require a more detailed analysis.

3.1. Internal Conflict in the Community

The previous discussion has noted that the dramatic setting of the Didascalia is the Apostolic Council of Acts 15. This choice is a poignant one considering the situation of third-century Syria. The first through third centuries witnessed the difficulties presented by conversion

⁶⁹ כְּרִיבֵי טוֹבָה וְכִרְבֵי טוֹבָה וְכִרְבֵי טוֹבָה וְכִרְבֵי טוֹבָה (CSCO 407:255); *propter naturale meatum et connixionem* (Connolly, *Didascalia*, 243).

⁷⁰ See DA 26, *CSCO* 408:239-242 for a similar (and extensive) discussion regarding menstruation.

and the question over adherence to biblical laws. The rhetorical effect of this choice by the Didascalist “reinscribes that earlier conflict into its own contemporary conflict and employs it as a lens through which to read the current conflict in its audience.”⁷¹

In discussing the pseudepigraphical claim of the text, van Unnik claims that the Didascalia utilizes the authority of the apostles in order to combat “*a very real and specific need to which the Didascalia was addressed.*”⁷² He concludes that the issues discussed indicate that there were controversies in the Didascalia community which necessitated its composition. Essentially, there was a practical purpose to the document. By investigating the polemical aims of the text itself, and allowing the text to speak on its own, van Unnik suggests that the nature of the controversies become apparent.⁷³ For similar reasons, Connolly describes the discussion of the second legislation in the final chapter (26) as the author’s “great polemic.”⁷⁴ Connolly rightly suggests that the immediately preceding chapters on heresy appear to marshal apostolic authority on the side of the author in preparation for the literary attack. This sentiment is found in the work of other scholars. “The Didascalia addresses from a unique angle the conflict between those who uphold practices signified as Jewish within the Christian community, and those who want to distinguish Christian community life from those practices.”⁷⁵ The nature of the hermeneutical strategy embodied in the term *deuterosis* and the subsequent evaluation of the Jewish traditions reflects a growing need within the author’s community to combat the interest of congregants who regularly engage in such practices.⁷⁶ Thus, the Didascalia’s argument for the existence of second legislation mirrors the author’s interest in prescribing aspects of the religious life of his community. This rhetorical strategy functions to remove from the religious life of his community practices considered unwanted or even dangerous in that they lead to divine condemnation.

⁷¹ Charlotte Elishiva Fonrobert, “A Mishnah for the Disciples of Jesus,” *JECS* 9 n.4 (2001): 483-509 (490).

⁷² Van Unnik, “Moses’ Law,” 10 (emphasis quoted).

⁷³ Van Unnik, “Moses’ Law,” 11.

⁷⁴ Connolly, *Didascalia*, xxxiv.

⁷⁵ Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity*, 167.

⁷⁶ Simon, *Verus Israel*, 94.

3.2. A Christian Audience

Whether the author of the Didascalia has members of his own community in the polemical crosshairs or he takes aim at those people and practices outside the community is debated. Scholars of Jewish-Christianity perceive the second legislation issue to be a result of Judaizers within the author's community. For example, Simon claims that the Didascalist wrote the text to combat the attraction his community has toward the Jewish traditions.⁷⁷ Similarly, Van Unnik argues that the author directs his text not to "a separate congregation but...to the author's own community and are regarded by him as such, for they take part in all its normal functions."⁷⁸ He suggests that there were those in the community, "so-called Judaizers," who insisted on maintaining Jewish customs.⁷⁹ Connolly also argues that the Didascalist uses the second legislation polemic specifically to target "certain Judaizing tendencies which it seems impossible not to recognize as a real and present danger in the community to which he belonged."⁸⁰ Connolly submits that those at whom the Didascalist takes aim are not outsiders but rather those among his own community.⁸¹ Yet, Connolly does not engage the issue that if the community considers itself followers of Christ, that is, Christians, whether these practices accepted by Christians can be labeled as Jewish. The Didascalia, then, is evidence of the ambiguous relationship between the constructs of Jews/Judaism and Christians/Christianity. The Syrian region was a place of "intense interaction between Jews, Christians, and other groups."⁸²

However, Strecker argues that the assumption that the author directs his attack to members of his own community is incorrect. Instead, Strecker suggests that the author represents

⁷⁷ Simon, *Verus Israel*, 88-91, 321-328

⁷⁸ Van Unnik, "Moses' Law," 31.

⁷⁹ Van Unnik, "Moses' Law," 33.

⁸⁰ Connolly, *Didascalia*, xxxiv.

⁸¹ Connolly, *Didascalia*, xxxvii.

⁸² Fonrobert, "A Mishnah for the Disciples of Jesus," 488. See also Han 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.

a community that is united against the negative external influences of so-called heretics.⁸³ Similarly, Fonrobert submits that the author must target people outside the community since his fellow congregants are baptized members and free from the effects of the second legislation⁸⁴ Elsewhere, however, Fonrobert argues that the Didascalia refers to those members of the author's community who engage in those traditions deemed part of the *deuterosis*.⁸⁵ She arrives at this second conclusion by attempting to reconstruct the supposed "heretics" of which the Didascalia speaks (see below). She pieces together the text's polemical targets such as abstaining from marriage, enforcing physical circumcision, multiple baptisms, and avoiding meat. Yet these supposed heretics are never named either individually or as a group. Fonrobert's indecision on the matter may be due to the fact that the Didascalia never indicates whether these beliefs and practices are maintained by members of the community or if they are being imported into the community.

In order to clarify the Didascalist's views on the matter, it is vital to realize which teachings he considers heretical. According to the Didascalia, one type of heresy taught that a man should not marry since only celibacy was holy. Another heresy taught that a man should not eat flesh since animals have souls. A third limited the dietary regulations to abstaining from swine flesh only, but taught that other animals considered unclean by the law can be consumed. Furthermore, this last faction also requires circumcision. In addition, there are some heretics who refuse to believe in the resurrection. Finally, the Didascalist explains that heretics do not use the scriptures and blaspheme against God (DA 23, 408:213; also discussed in DA 26, *CSCO* 408:237-238). Overall, the Didascalist informs his audience that all of these groups have one law: "that they should not use the Torah and the prophets, and that they should blaspheme God Almighty, and should not believe in the resurrection" (DA 23, *CSCO* 408:213). According to the text, these groups follow aspects of the second legislation (DA 24, *CSCO* 408:214).

Schism(s) must have arisen within the community since the Didascalist devotes an entire chapter (chapter 23) to the so-called heresies from which they spring. The majority of this chapter recalls the events of the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram against Moses

⁸³ "On the Problem of Jewish Christianity," 255.

⁸⁴ Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity*, 207.

⁸⁵ Fonrobert, "A Mishnah for the Disciples of Jesus," 494-6.

(Numbers 16). The author advises that, like this ancient rebellion, anyone joining a schism will incur divine condemnation (DA 23, *CSCO* 408:207). The truly faithful will not entertain the ideas of schismatics since they are blasphemous to God: “the heathen are judged because they have not known, but the heretics are condemned because they are against God” (DA 23, *CSCO* 408:208).

Let us now return to the issue of whether the Didascalist targets insiders or outsiders with the false scripture argument. Fonrobert rightly suggests that the anonymity of the ‘heretics’ exists because they are members of the same group as the author; there is no group identity that is able to distinguish them from those other communal members who avoid the *deuterosis*.⁸⁶ This idea explains the Didascalia’s emphasis on attaining the proper means of interpreting the scriptures and thus avoiding the *deuterosis*. It likewise reveals why the Didascalist insists on abstaining from particular practices and traditions that constitute the second legislation.

In line with Fonrobert, I argue that the “heretics” mentioned in the Didascalia represent other forms of Christianity active in the author’s setting. Most likely part of the author’s regional community, these other Christians are targeted as heretics by the Didascalist in order to construct a sense of otherness. The author illustrates how “they” are different from “us” – whether or not these others considered themselves part of the same community as the Didascalist. The second legislation argument, therefore, is a viable means of discernment. According to the rhetorical standpoint of the Didascalist, knowledge of the second legislation is the dividing line between successful members of the author’s community and those who stand outside its walls. Recall that a central point in the proem of the Didascalia is that Christians are either rewarded or condemned by God according to whether they follow the regulations outlined in the text (DA 1, *CSCO* 402:9). Furthermore, the Didascalist states that the scriptures “are the foundation of the truth of our faith” (DA 21, *CSCO* 408:188). True members of the author’s community, then, are those who follow the proper teachings, which includes avoiding the practices of the second legislation. Thus, in the end, I submit that the heretics attacked by the Didascalist represent alternate modes of Christianity that exist in close proximity to the author’s own community. The Didascalia itself functions didactically to preserve the social borders for his congregation by pointing out the flaws in other religious practices.

⁸⁶ Fonrobert, “A Mishnah for the Disciples of Jesus,” 494-6.

3.3. Markers of Identity

It has been argued that the Didascalia never overtly identifies itself as Christian, Jewish, or Jewish Christian.⁸⁷ In my analysis, the Didascalia can be described as Christian. The category of Jewish Christian is notoriously problematic.⁸⁸ Therefore, this option can and should be dismissed. The text emphasizes the elect status of the “Catholic Church,” allots Christ a critical role in the elimination of those laws considered part of the second legislation. A Jewish identity is unlikely since the text denounces many Jewish traditions as elements of the second legislation. Furthermore, although there is evidence that the author presents himself as ethnically Jewish,⁸⁹ he clearly considers himself to be among the “disciples of Christ”⁹⁰ and part of a Christian tradition that emphasizes the role of Christ, the apostles, and adheres to a Christian theology that has strong connections to other Christians of the second through fourth centuries. In my estimation, these points demonstrate that the Didascalia embraces the label “Christian.”

Chapter one of the Didascalia opens by addressing “His catholic Church, the elect”⁹¹ (DA 1, *CSCO* 402: 9). This phrase or similar variations of it appear regularly throughout the text (e.g., DA 8, *CSCO* 402:91-92, 99; DA 11, *CSCO* 408:129). “Hear these things now, you laymen also, the elect church of God. For the former people were also called a church; you, however, are the catholic Church, the holy and perfect, ‘a royal priesthood, a holy assembly, a people for inheritance,’ the great Church, the bride adorned for the Lord God” (DA 9, *CSCO* 402:99).

⁸⁷ Fonrobert, “A Mishnah for the Disciples of Jesus,” 483.

⁸⁸ See, for example, Joan Taylor, “The Phenomenon of Early Jewish-Christianity: Reality or Scholarly Invention?” *Vigiliae Christianae* 44 (1990): 313-334.

⁸⁹ “Now we know that our Savior did not say (this) to the Gentiles, but He said it to us His disciples from among the Jews, and brought us out from burdens and a heavy load” (DA, 26.226.23-24). Fonrobert also observes this marker of ethnic identity (*Menstrual Purity*, 167). Yet, this claim may be part of the dramatic effect of the pseudonymous attribution of the text to the disciples who were Jewish.

⁹⁰ In DA 20, *CSCO* 408:182, the author describes himself and his community as “disciples of Christ” (*fideles Christi*; Connolly, *Didascalia*, 177; אֲתָנָּא דְּתַלְמֵי יֵשׁוּעַ; *CSCO* 407:200).

⁹¹ *catolica ecclesia eius et electi sunt* (Connolly, *Didascalia*, 3); אֲתָנָּא דְּתַלְמֵי יֵשׁוּעַ וְעַלְמֵיהֶּם (CSCO 401:11).

Furthermore, the author frequently describes the members of the community as Christians. For example, “Christians” (*Christianis*; ܕܢܘܨܬܝܢ) keep the simple and true law, especially the golden rule (DA 1, *CSCO* 402:10). Christians should not participate in the heathen festivals (DA 21, *CSCO* 408:185). Women are advised to act according to the proper standards expounded in biblical works like Proverbs since they are “Christian” (DA 3, *CSCO* 402:26). In addition, any “Christian” who is led into temptation by Satan should be avoided. They deny their identity as Christians and are cursed for it. On the other hand, those Christians who suffer as confessors will be blessed (DA 19, *CSCO* 408:169-171; see also DA 19, *CSCO* 408:174). Apparently, because these Christian martyrs follow the model of Christ they are members of the community by adhering to the law of the Gospel.

Given the above evidence, it is clear that the author considers himself part of a community of Christians. Even though this term is fraught with ambiguity and non-specificity, I suggest that the author understands Christian as a designation for those people, Jews or Gentiles, who follow the teachings of Christ. In part, this lifestyle involves adhering to only the authentic portions of the scriptures by avoiding the elements of the second legislation. As discussed above, those considered heretics may be understood by the Didascalist as other types of Christians, but they are not part of the elect community. In addition, this community is no longer part of “the People” of Israel – a label which deserves further attention.

3.4. “The people”

The Didascalia “sprang from a Church that was clearly composed of both Jews and Gentiles but was having considerable difficulty in defining the boundaries between itself and Judaism. Its attitude toward the Jews is, therefore, ambiguous.”⁹² The term “the People” appears often within the Didascalia. It appears to represent the Jews of the Didascalist’s time and place who continue to maintain beliefs and practices no longer considered necessary by the author. The Didascalist likely envisions the rabbinic schools and their followers, but he may also include Gentiles who engage in Jewish practices. In the Didascalist’s retelling of biblical history the term

⁹² A.P. Hayman, “The Image of the Jew in Syriac anti-Jewish Polemical Literature,” in *To See Ourselves as Others See Us”: Christians, Jews, “Others” in Late Antiquity* (ed. Jacob Neusner and Ernest S. Frerichs; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 423-441 (425).

appears as a type of code name for the Israelites, as seen in the golden calf incident. It does, however, appear in other contexts within the Didascalia. “For all the activity of the Lord our God has passed from the (Jewish) people to the church through us the apostles...God had abandoned the people of the Jews and the temple, and has come to the church of the Gentiles” (DA 23, *CSCO* 408:208-209). The Didascalist advises “you who have been converted from the People to believe in God our Savior Jesus Christ” to discontinue the practices of obligations (vows?), purifications and sprinklings, baptisms,⁹³ and the distinction of meats (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:223). According to the Didascalist, Christ blames the People for his death (DA 21, 408:192; see also DA 21, *CSCO* 408:200). Also, the Didascalia states that the People rejected Christ and his teachings (DA 21, *CSCO* 408:193-194).

The phrase “the people” (of Israel) is found in texts other than the Didascalia, in particular *adversus Iudaios* writings like Melito of Sardis’ *Peri Pascha*.⁹⁴ In these writings, the term is frequently associated with a supersessionist model where the new order of the Christian church has replaced the Jews (Israel) as the elect of God. It is easy to assume that the author’s use of the “the People” functioned to indicate the Jews of the author’s own time period. If true, then the Didascalia, at least in part, targets Jews when discussing the second legislation. In addition, the indication of the Jews as the initial cause of the second legislation further associates the Jewish traditions with the punishment from God.

In addition, “the people” may be employed as a rhetorical device to target Christian schismatics in the Didascalia community. The Didascalist might associate those Christians he does not consider true members with the idolatrous “people” who offended God. The author’s aim is to disenfranchise alternative forms of Christianity couched in the rhetoric against Jews and Judaism. The author likely perceived these Christians as competitors and threats to the stability

⁹³ The inclusion of baptisms in the list of incorrect practices is curiously contradictory in the Didascalia. Since the term is not qualified here, we should perhaps assume that the author and his audience understood the difference between acceptable and unacceptable baptisms.

⁹⁴ For an analysis of the usage of “the people” in the *Peri Pascha* see Lynn Cohick’s “Melito of Sardis’s ‘PERI PASHCA’ and Its ‘Israel,’” *Harvard Theological Review* 91 n. 4 (1998): 351-372. She states that the author of the text uses the term “Israel” in a number of ways including: (1) a reference to biblical Jews; (2) a reference to contemporary Jews; (3) a reference to both; or (4) as a foil for Christian beliefs, with “Israel” being merely a caricature of Judaism” (358-359). As the present analysis will demonstrate, there are strong similarities between “Israel” in the *Peri Pascha* and “the people” in the Didascalia.

of his own group and their maintenance of what he considered authentic Christianity.⁹⁵ Therefore, the people may be a generalized persona for anyone who continues in the ways of the second legislation, whether Gentile or Jew.

Fonrobert engages the Didascalia's use of the "the people."⁹⁶ The generalized use of the term "the people" reflects an awareness of the ethnic identity of Jews as something other than the Gentiles who also share an inheritance of the scriptures. The Didascalia, however, does not employ the term "Jews"; there are simply those from the people who follow Jesus and those who do not. Therefore, "the people" may not indicate that the author was one of their descendents, that is, a Jew, at all. If this is the case, then "the people" may simply refer to those members of the author's community who choose an alternative hermeneutic of the scriptures to what the author upholds. Aware of the disparity, the Didascalist writes his text, claims Fonrobert, under the guise of the apostles in order to legitimate his hermeneutic above any others. Thus, the situation of the Didascalia revolves around the issue of scriptural interpretation. The Didascalist was familiar with "the same hermeneutical language"⁹⁷ as the rabbis who likely resided in the same region and town as our author. It is very possible, then, that the Didascalist uses the second legislation argument to attack the validity of the rabbinic tradition.

I agree with Fonrobert that the issue of hermeneutics was a central concern for the Didascalist. I have argued above that the second legislation is a literary argument designed to prescribe and maintain the type of religious life of the community idealized by the author. However, Fonrobert's supposition that the author is not a Jew does not cohere with certain passages from the text. One example reads: "But these things He endured for our sake, that He might redeem us, those who are from the people, from the bonds of" the second legislation "of

⁹⁵ Michele Murray's *Playing a Jewish Game: Gentile Christian Judaizing in the First and Second Centuries CE*. (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2004) suggests, in general, that Christian attacks on Jews in early Christian writings are actually a reflection of increased pagan interest in Jewish practices by Gentile "Judaizers." See also Christina Shepherdson's dissertation "In the Service of Orthodoxy: Anti-Jewish Language and Intra-Christian Conflict in the Writings of Ephrem the Syrian" (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 2003) which argues that Ephrem's seemingly anti-Jewish polemics was actually addressed to supposed "heretical" Christians in Ephrem's fourth-century community who were participating in Jewish ways.

⁹⁶ Fonrobert, "A Mishnah for the Disciples of Jesus," 499-501.

⁹⁷ Fonrobert, "A Mishnah for the Disciples of Jesus," 506, 508.

which we have spoken before, and that he might redeem you also, who are of the gentiles, from the fear of idols and from all iniquity, and make you to inherit” (DA 19, *CSCO* 408:172). Furthermore, the author also refers to the bonds of the second legislation being “laid upon the former people and upon the present church of God, even as now also in the Church it is upon us, upon those who are called from the people, and upon you and upon those who from among the gentiles who have obtained mercy for them: it has gathered and held us both together in one accord” (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:231). Thus, even though the Didascalist considers his community a group of Christians, he places it within a Jewish lineage. The Didascalist presents himself and likely others in the community to be ethnic Jews who adhere to a Christian faith. The regular warnings on the second legislation found throughout the Didascalia may confirm that there were Jews in the elect community who were attracted to the Jewish traditions that were no longer sanctioned by this author.

At one point during the discussion of the second legislation in chapter 26, the Didascalist quotes Matthew 11:28: “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” He then expounds on this statement, understanding the reference to heavy burdens and rest as the heavy yoke of the second legislation and the rest associated with its abolishment. Furthermore, the author notes that this statement was not made to Gentiles but to “us His disciples from among the Jews” (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:230). The implication made here is that it is the Jews who have been punished with the second legislation, not the Gentiles who apparently have imitated the Jews by some ignorant mistake. Thus, I argue that the polemic against the second legislation found in the Didascalia is not directed at Gentiles who are sympathetic or attracted to the ways of Judaism but rather Christians who are ethnically Jewish who insist on maintaining the Jewish traditions within the Christian congregation of the Didascalia.

Fonrobert has suggested that the Didascalia functions as a “counter-Mishnah” for disciples of Jesus.⁹⁸ Her argument is based on the idea that the Didascalia presents a type of biblical hermeneutic that parallels the midrashic tradition of the rabbis while at the same time challenging the authority and validity of rabbinic tradition before rabbinic Judaism established

⁹⁸ Fonrobert, “A Mishnah for the Disciples of Jesus,” 483.

itself as “the representative form of Judaism.”⁹⁹ In this light, claims Fonrobert, the Didascalia could be considered Jewish.

“Jewish-Christian” author(s) may explicitly identify as Christian in the sense of attributing a fundamental significance to Jesus. But even such self-designations need to be questioned in each case since they are not self-explanatory. In each case we need to question what “Christian” and “Jewish” means to the author(s) of such “Jewish-Christian” texts, since “Christian” is not a stable category until late into the period of the Christianization of Roman imperial power and the consolidation of political-institutional Christian power.¹⁰⁰

Fonrobert suggests that the Didascalia might represent one voice in the dynamic discussion among ancient writings to determine what is and what is not acceptable Jewish practice within Jewish communities.¹⁰¹ As the Mishnah and Tosefta were edited in the third and early fourth centuries, the Didascalia was composed as a literary competitor. For example, the golden calf event is also cited as the crucial sin of the Israelites among rabbinic texts; its reference in the Didascalia would speak to those in the community familiar with midrashic tradition.¹⁰² The Didascalia, then, is one of many texts that appropriated the authority to possess and interpret scripture – not to mention the divine favor associated with it. Fonrobert suggests that the Didascalist was aware of the codification of mishnaic traditions within the rabbinic movement and designed his text as a counter-Mishnah to discourage members of the community from engaging in many of these regulations.¹⁰³ At the same time, the Didascalia attempts to delegitimize the rabbinic traditions and challenge their authority to properly interpret the scriptures.¹⁰⁴ Yet, even though the rabbinic writings understand the ritual laws of Deuteronomy and Leviticus as markers of Jewish identity that need to be celebrated as a sign of divine favor,

⁹⁹ Fonrobert, “A Mishnah for the Disciples of Jesus,” 483.

¹⁰⁰ Fonrobert, “A Mishnah for the Disciples of Jesus,” 485.

¹⁰¹ Fonrobert, “A Mishnah for the Disciples of Jesus,” 486-8.

¹⁰² Fonrobert, “A Mishnah for the Disciples of Jesus,” 502-3.

¹⁰³ Fonrobert, “A Mishnah for the Disciples of Jesus,” 496.

¹⁰⁴ Fonrobert, “A Mishnah for the Disciples of Jesus,” 498.

the Didascalia portrays these laws as a sign of divine punishment.¹⁰⁵

Even so, Fonrobert has no problem describing the Didascalia's construction of a "Christian identity" that is less than stable and requires buttressing by a text supposedly written by the apostles. "The Didascalia does locate itself much more self-consciously as a Christian document, and as a document that attempts to build a community of those who are disciples of Jesus, in distinction from rabbinic tradition, among others."¹⁰⁶ I agree with her conclusion that the Didascalist's efforts reflect the inexact dimensions of religious life in the community. I find that the Didascalia's interest in attacking "the People" is motivated by the goal of invalidating and disenfranchising the rabbinic traditions of the author's third-century context which likely posed some level of competition with the Didascalist's Jewish members. Yet, not only were those ethnic Jews in the community attracted to the ways of the second legislation but also the resident Gentiles.

3.5. The Gentiles

As discussed above, it appears that there were ethnic Jews among the members of the author's Christian community, that is, those from among the People. At the same time, there were also Gentiles in the community. In a discussion on resurrection, the Didascalist explains that unbelievers are aware of such a belief since it has been proclaimed by the Sibyl and is evident in the story of the phoenix (DA 20, *CSCO* 408:179-181). Within this discussion, our author states that those unbelievers are "from the Gentiles, and even the heathen."¹⁰⁷ Shortly after, he continues to discuss that the resurrection was explained not only by the Sibyl and the Phoenix to the Gentiles but this teaching was also conveyed through "the holy scriptures...to the Jews and the Gentiles and Christians at once" (DA 20, *CSCO* 408:180). This passage apparently indicates that the Didascalist considers Gentiles/heathen, Jews and Christians as separate groups.

¹⁰⁵ Simon, *Verus Israel*, 164.

¹⁰⁶ Fonrobert, "A Mishnah for the Disciples of Jesus," 502.

¹⁰⁷ *ex gentibus...et gentiles* (Connolly, *Didascalia*, 171); *من ديارهم و من اهلهم* (DA 20, *CSCO* 407:197)

Within the Didascalia, there is a recurring polemic against participating in pagan festivals and other religious traditions (DA 13, *CSCO* 408:138-139). The text mentions that bishops are to avoid engaging in “the festivals of the heathen”¹⁰⁸ since such practices are considered erroneous by the Didascalist (DA 4, *CSCO* 402:48). The Didascalist explains that the pagan temples are actually based on the Jewish temple (DA 9, *CSCO* 402:102). The heathen are dedicated to their religious activities and ministering to their idols (DA 13, *CSCO* 408:136). This is not to say, however, that members should understand this observation to mean that the heathen assemblies should be respected. Their religion is based on fables that are from the spirit of Satan (DA 13, 408:138). Therefore, the text’s audience has no excuse for attending the heathen “spectacle of the theatre” (DA 13, 408:137).

Those people who engage in pagan practices place themselves outside the believing community; they side with others who are condemned by God. The Didascalist contends that those already baptized will not backslide to their former ways of “heresy” like “the abominable and defiled works of the wicked heathen”; to do so condemns one to the fire of Gehenna (DA 5, *CSCO* 402:50-51). The text clearly states that those who engage in blasphemy or reject the scriptures are condemned as an enemy of Christ (DA 25, *CSCO* 408:221-222). Yet “the heathen” are not barred from being accepted; if they repent from their error of idolatry then they are able to enter the community (DA 10, *CSCO* 402:112).

The Didascalist states that the Gentiles will not accept the word of God – “how our Lord clothed Himself in the body, and about the passion of Christ” – if it is delivered by a woman; they will only ridicule the teaching (DA 15, *CSCO* 408:145). Furthermore, the woman will “incur a heavy judgement for sin” on account of this scenario. The Didascalist explains that the twelve male apostles were directed to instruct “the People” and the Gentiles. Those women who were present, such as Mary Magdalene, Mary the daughter of James, and the other Mary, were never sent out to instruct anyone (DA 15, *CSCO* 408:145). If women were supposed to baptize, so claims the Didascalist, then Mary would have baptized Jesus; yet it was John who baptized

¹⁰⁸ כַּדְּרֵי הַשִּׁמְרִים (CSCO 401:56).

Jesus. Therefore, a woman baptizing is against “the law of the Gospel” and “is a transgression of the commandment” (DA 15, *CSCO* 408:151).¹⁰⁹

Gentiles who have been delivered from their idolatry are instructed to pray on behalf of the People due to the “error and destruction” brought about by their disobedience (DA 21, *CSCO* 408:193). The author envisions his community as superior to the non-believers and works to impress this notion upon his audience. According to the Didascalist, the divine favor once held by the Jews has been transferred to the Church. In the process, God has left the presence of the people (DA 23, *CSCO* 408: 208-209). Also, God has removed the Holy Spirit from upon the people and placed it in the church (DA 23, *CSCO* 408:211). This change, however, is not without consequences. Satan also has departed from the People and now assaults the Church. He has, according to the Didascalist, already conquered the People and now sets his sights on the Church by spreading heresies and sponsoring schisms (DA 23, *CSCO* 408:211). Satan even became manifest in human form as the person known as Simon the magician. This Simon instigated the People against the Apostles while he preached to the Gentiles as well as leading many Gentiles astray (DA 23, *CSCO* 408:212).¹¹⁰ Peter, however, was able to stifle Simon’s powers. Even so, Simon was the source for many heretical ideas. Yet the “apostles” of the Didascalia counter these heresies by specifically charging the audience to worship God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit, to employ the scriptures, to believe in the resurrection of the dead, to consume all creatures, and to marry (DA 24, *CSCO* 408:214).

The Didascalia presents the emerging Christian ecclesiastical hierarchy as a new version of the recognized markers of religion (and religious identity) from the scriptures. “Hear these things, then, you laymen also, the elect Church of God. For the former People also was called a church; but you are the Catholic Church, the holy and perfect, a royal priesthood, a holy multitude, a people for inheritance, the great Church, the bride adorned for the Lord God” (DA 9, *CSCO* 402:99). The Catholic Church has replaced the church of the former people; the Catholic Church is a royal priesthood, a bride adorned for Christ (DA 9, *CSCO* 402:99). They are the ones

¹⁰⁹ However, women do have a role to fulfill in the ministry according to the Didascalia. Although they are barred from administering baptism, deaconesses are to attend to women undergoing baptism, to visit believing women in heathen households, and visit the sick (DA 16, *CSCO* 408:157-158).

¹¹⁰ The Pseudo-Clementines, like many other early Christian authors, also share in the idea that Simon is the father of all heresies (see chapter four).

who “were rescued from the ten plagues and did receive the ten sayings, and did learn the Law, and hold the faith...and are fixed in the perfection of His glory” (DA 9, *CSCO* 402:99). Expanding on this idea, the Didascalist explains that Christ is the high priest (DA 9, *CSCO* 402:99), the priests and Levites are actually the presbyters, deacons, orphans, and widows (DA 9, *CSCO* 402:100). Yet, it is also explained that the bishop is the high priest since he rules in place of God, while the deacon and deaconess stand in for Christ and the Holy Spirit, respectively. The apostles are now the presbyters, and the orphans and widows represent the altar (DA 9, *CSCO* 402:100).¹¹¹

3.6. Conclusion

In the end, I submit that the Didascalia was written to a Christian community that was made up of Jews and Gentiles in third-century Syria. The setting of the Didascalia can be described as a melting pot of Jews, Christians, and pagans.¹¹² The concerns of the Didascalia, most clearly represented in the second legislation argument, reflect such a historical situation. Christians within the Didascalist’s community did not have clear social and religious boundaries, or some congregants simply did not adhere to them. The author is aware of “heretics” whose religious identity is something similar but not identical to that found in his community. He writes the Didascalia to rhetorically enforce an imagined boundary in order to prevent his members from participating in these supposedly inauthentic traditions.

The central charge of idolatry that is so prevalent in the Didascalia functions to distance community members from the ways of paganism, which was likely a stumbling block to Gentile converts. More importantly, the rhetoric of idolatry also serves to target most of the Mosaic laws which were the result of God’s punishment of the People for worshipping the golden calf. The

¹¹¹ Robert Murray’s *Symbols of Church and Kingdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1975) details how other Syrian documents present Christians as models of other themes and symbols in the early Church (see especially 131-158).

¹¹² “The Syrian area, moreover, has never been a cultural unity, and therefore it displayed a variety of religious traditions even in late antique times after so many centuries during which the unifying tendencies of Greco-Roman culture had made themselves felt” (Han Drijvers, “The Persistence of Pagan Cults and Practices in Christian Syria,” in *East of Antioch: Studies in Early Syriac Christianity* (London, Variorum Reprints, 1984), 35-43 (35). See also Drijvers’ “Jews and Christians at Edessa,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 36 (Spr 1985): 88-102, as well as Segal’s *Edessa ‘The Blessed City’* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1970), 62.

extensive list of inauthentic and temporary laws found in the second legislation clearly targets Jewish traditions, perhaps those maintained by the rabbinic circles with which the Didascalist would have been in close contact in third century Syria. The Didascalia, then, utilizes a rhetorical strategy of inauthentic religious laws to construct a certain type of Christian identity that is different than other Christian traditions (the “heretics”), the idolatrous pagans who uphold heathen practices, and the rabbinic Jews, with whom the Didascalist directly competed regarding the authority of the scriptures.

CHAPTER 4: THE FALSE PASSAGES OF THE PSEUDO-CLEMENTINE *HOMILIES*

1. A Brief History of the Pseudo-Clementines

A basic description of the Pseudo-Clementines might look something like the following: The Pseudo-Clementines are a handful of writings that journal the apostle Peter and Clement of Rome's various travels and theological debates, during which Clement is reunited with his estranged family. The narrative format of the Pseudo-Clementines is typical of the romance novels of the ancient world. Even so, some argue that these writings represent "the only true Christian novel that has survived from antiquity – perhaps it was the only Christian novel ever composed."¹ Theologically, these writings offer a unique presentation of biblical traditions – one which has proven difficult for scholars to label as Jewish, Christian, or even Jewish Christian. Furthermore, when we investigate the texts beyond the novelistic elements of the novel, the Pseudo-Clementines provide a rich source of fascinating topics. A variety of source-critical models exist that account for a range of sources incorporated into what is now today the Clementine corpus.

1.1. Source Criticism and the Pseudo-Clementines

The discussion of sources has dominated scholarly discussion concerning the Pseudo-Clementines and the evolution of the extant *Recognitions* and *Homilies*.² The Pseudo-

¹ F. Stanley Jones, "Clement of Rome and the *Pseudo-Clementines*: History and/or Fiction" in *Studi su Clemente Romano: Atti degli Incontri di Roma, 29 marzo e 22 novembre 2001* (Orientalia Christiana Analecta 268, ed. Philippe Luisier; Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 2003), 139-161 (150). Jones' article provides a thought-provoking analysis of the Pseudo-Clementine novel and what illumination it provides for research in the field, especially on the figure of Clement and his role in the Pseudo-Clementine writings and community.

² The standard critical edition of the *Homilies* and *Recognitions* is Bernhard Rehm's *Die Pseudoklementinen I: Homilien*. GCS, vol. 42, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1969 [1st ed., 1953]). The most well-known English translation of the Pseudo-Clementines is by Thomas Smith found within The Ante-Nicene Fathers collection (*ANF*, American edition, 8.73-346). The *Homilies* is known in its Greek form and dates back to the eleventh or twelfth centuries. However, a Syriac version exists in a manuscript which has been dated to 411 including portions of the *Homilies* (*Hom.* 10-12.24; 13-14.12) and the *Recognitions* (*Rec.* 1-4.1). See Wilhelm

Clementines are composed of two central documents, the *Recognitions of Clement* and the *Clementine Homilies*. The *Epistle of Peter to James* and the *Epistle of Clement to James*, which are considerably shorter than the other two lengthy writings, also belong to the corpus. However, my investigation will focus mostly on the development of the *Homilies* and less on the *Recognitions* since former offers a more detailed explanation of the false passages theory.

There is a consensus that there are sources behind the present versions of *Recognitions* and *Homilies*. The similarities between *Homilies* and *Recognitions* have led to a theory that both writings relate to an earlier, now lost source typically referred to as the *Grundschrift* (G) or the Basic Writing (B). The Basic Writing has been dated anywhere from 200 (Bigg) to 260 (Strecker) to 325 (Chapman), though many scholars argue for a narrower range of 220-230 (Waitz, Schmidt).³ Strecker and Irscher suggest the date of the Homilies, however, to be before the establishment of the Nicene Creed, likely early in the fourth century.⁴ The Basic Writing is dated to no earlier than 220 since it is dependent on the work of Bardaisan.⁵ Most scholars locate the Basic Writing in Syria rather than the earlier accepted suggestion of Rome.⁶ There has also

Frankenberg's *Die syrischen Clementinen mit griechischem Paralleltext. Eine Vorarbeit zu dem literargeschichtlichen Problem der Sammlung*, TU, vol. 48.3 (Leipzig; J.C. Hinrichs, 1937).

³ Hans Waitz, *Die Pseudoklementinen Homilien und Rekognitionen: Eine Quellenkritische Untersuchung* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1904); Carl Schmidt, *Studien zu den Pseudo-Clementinen* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1929).

⁴ Georg Strecker and Johannes Irscher, "The Pseudo-Clementines," in *New Testament Apocrypha Vol. 2* (ed by Wilhelm Schneemelcher; trans. R. McL. Wilson; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989), 483-540 (485). Strecker's opinion is based on the Homilist's attitude toward the Trinitarian question in 16.16 and 20.7.

⁵ Birdsall, "Problems of the Clementine Literature," in *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways A.D. 70 to 135* (ed. J.D.G. Dunn; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 347-361 (348).

⁶ Jones, "A History of Research I," in *The Second Century 2* (1982): 1-33 (9-10), which includes a list of reasons for why Syria seems a better location than Rome. It was Gerhard Uhlhorn (*Die Homilien und Recognitionen des Clemens Romanus nach ihrem Ursprung und Inhalt dargestellt*. Göttingen: Dietrische Buchhandlung, 1854) who observed that, even though the figure of Clement is often associated with Rome, Syria makes more sense than Rome due to the existence of analogous religious systems, connections with Gnostic Jewish Christianity, the nature of the Pseudo-Clementines' polemic, and the emerging church order in Syria (summarized in Jones, 9-10).

been considerable discussion about the relationship among the Basic Writing, *Homilies*, and *Recognitions*. Some scholars posit that *Recognitions* was dependent on the Basic Writing and that *Homilies* was later generated from *Recognitions*, while others argue that it was *Recognitions* that was dependent on *Homilies* which used the Basic Writing. A third option claims that *Homilies* and *Recognitions* are each independently dependent on the Basic Writing (Lehmann 10, especially Waitz 12). This opinion is the most common.⁷ However, there is no consensus on if and how the *Homilies* and *Recognitions* possibly altered the theology of the Basic Writing, or if the author of the Basic Writing was simply a compiler of information from other sources. “With regard to its redactional tendencies, the *Homilies* is generally considered to reproduce the content of the *Grundschrift* more closely than the *Recognitions*.”⁸

Scholars have also theorized that the Basic Writing had a number of sources of its own.⁹ Perhaps the most important and most discussed of these hypothetical sources which lie behind the hypothetical Basic Writing is the *Kerygmata Petrou (KP)*. Reconstructed from *Rec* 1.27-72 and the sources mentioned in *Rec* 3.75, and *Hom* 2-3, 16-20, this material is believed by many to derive from an Ebionite or Elchasaite community.¹⁰ The *KP* has commonly been dated to the mid- to late second century. The central themes of the *KP* include the notion of a true prophet who recurs throughout history, a dualistic explanation of the world through the doctrine of the syzygies, or pairs, the theory of the false passages, an emphasis on baptism, and an anti-Pauline tendency.¹¹ Also, the death of Jesus has no religious significance; rather, just conduct leads to

⁷ Jones, “A History of Research I,” 9-14. *idem*, “History and/or Fiction,” 141.

⁸ Nicole Kelley, *Knowledge & Religious Authority in the Pseudo-Clementines: Situating the Recognitions in Fourth Century Syria* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006) 14. See also 14-17 for a helpful summary of the redactional differences between the *Homilies* and the *Recognitions*.

⁹ Birdsall, “Problems of the Clementine Literature,” 348. For a full summary of these sources see Jones, “A History of Research I,” 14-33.

¹⁰ Jones, “A History of Research I,” 16-18, relates that, according to the Tübingen school, the *Pseudo-Clementines* testify that the catholic Church arose out of Petrinism and Paulism, an expression of Ebionitism (with its anti-Paulism). The *Pseudo-Clementines* represent a step from Ebionitism toward Catholicism (Strecker and Irmscher, “The Pseudo-Clementines,” 486).

¹¹ Birdsall, “Problems of the Clementine Literature,” 352-354. However, as will be discussed below, not all scholars agree that the false passages theory should be placed within the *KP* stratum but may be either earlier (Schoeps) or later (Strecker).

successful last judgment.¹²

F.S. Jones has recently argued that previous work on the existence of *KP* has been among the “fantasies of scholarly imagination.”¹³ Jones instead claims that the *Periodoi Petrou*, or the *Circuits of Peter* – the probable name of the Basic Writing – has been mostly ignored in scholarship. He submits that the central points of the *Circuits of Peter* include a belief that God sends teachers of truth, such as Moses being sent to the Hebrews and Jesus to the Gentiles, and the necessity of individual action in attaining salvation.¹⁴ In addition, Jones has also worked extensively on analyzing *Rec* 1.27-71, which he believes is another source of the author of the Basic Writing that contests the account of the Acts of the Apostles.¹⁵

1.2. Source Criticism and the False Passages

The prevailing approach to the Pseudo-Clementine writings has involved source criticism. The various theories about earlier sources which may be reconstructed – and with them possible direct evidence of Jewish Christianity – is evident in the work of such authors as H.-J. Schoeps and G. Strecker.¹⁶

¹² Strecker and Irmscher, “The Pseudo-Clementines,” 485, 489-491. For a specific outline of the contents of B and their parallels in the *Recognitions* and the *Homilies*, see Jones, “History and/or Fiction,” 142-144.

¹³ Jones, “Jewish Christianity of the *Pseudo-Clementines*,” in *A Companion to Second-Century Christian “Heretics.”* (ed. Antti Marjanen and Petri Luomanen; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 315-334 (316).

¹⁴ Jones, “Jewish Christianity of the *Pseudo-Clementines*,” 328.

¹⁵ Jones, *An Ancient Jewish Christian Source on the History of Christianity: Pseudo-Clementines “Recognitions” 1.27-71* (Texts and Translations 37, Christian Apocrypha Series 2; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995); *idem*, “An Ancient Jewish Christian Rejoinder to Luke’s Acts of the Apostles: Pseudo-Clementines *Recognitions* 1.27-71,” in *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles in Intertextual Perspectives* (ed. Robert F. Stoops, Jr.; *Semeia* 80; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 223-245.

¹⁶ Even so, J. Munck has argued that the Pseudo-Clementine corpus is not a witness to “primitive Jewish Christian” doctrines since the literary evidence testifies to authors and communities of the fourth century (“Jewish Christianity in Post-Apostolic Times,” in *Early Christianity and Judaism* (ed. Everett Ferguson; New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1993), 112-115). Munck seems less interested in what the supposed sources might convey about earlier times.

Yet if there are sources behind the *Homilies*, we must ask where the false passages material should be located. Two of the more extensive expositions of the false passages notion stem from Georg Strecker and Hans J. Schoeps. Their respective works on the false passages in the Pseudo-Clementines are standards in the field and deserve special attention within the current dissertation.

Georg Strecker has argued that the false passage theory of the Pseudo-Clementines is derived from more “rationalistic”¹⁷ approaches to the Jewish scriptures instigated by Jewish authors, as found within Philo and rabbinic midrash, as well as Gnostic evaluations of the Jewish scriptures.¹⁸ Since he devotes much more of his discussion to the latter rather than the former, Strecker apparently believes the false passages to be a hermeneutical weapon against the Gnostics.¹⁹ The possible polemical connection between the false passages and the Marcionites leads Strecker to claim that the layer of the Pseudo-Clementines that contains the false passages theory is not original to the *KP*, an older source incorporated within the Basic Writing. Instead, he believes that the stratum containing the false passages theory was interwoven within the other material utilized by the Basic Writer at a later stage.²⁰ The anti-Marcionite adjustments found in the *Homilies* reflect later attitudes since they contradict what he claims are characteristic portions of the earlier *KP* source, such as the negative version of the cosmic myth and the depravity of the sexual life.²¹ Strecker therefore concludes that the false passages theory could not have been directed against the Marcionites alone.

I do not agree with all of Strecker’s conclusions. As argued in a previous chapter, *Ptolemy’s Letter to Flora* contains an argument for the existence of false scripture that was, at least in part, designed to counter the influence of Marcionite theology. There is little reason to doubt that the author(s) of the earlier sources, such as the *KP*, would have encountered

¹⁷ It appears that Strecker uses the term “rationalistic” to indicate an objective or critical approach.

¹⁸ Strecker, *Judenchristentum*, 186.

¹⁹ Strecker, *Judenchristentum*, 167. For more on the false passages and the Marcionites see the conclusions below.

²⁰ Strecker, *Judenchristentum*, 167-169.

²¹ Strecker, *Judenchristentum*, 167.

Marcionites and their methods of biblical criticism. This is not to say that the false passages of the Pseudo-Clementines are designed against the Marcionites alone. Other so-called Gnostics, such as the Valentinians, also crafted their own interpretation of the Jewish scriptures, especially the creation story of Genesis, to validate their notions about multiple deities. This observation is an important one within Strecker's analysis and one with which I would agree: Marcion and his followers were not the only targets of the false passages theory in the Pseudo-Clementines.²² However, Marcionites were active in Syria, the proposed origin of the *Pseudo-Clementines*,²³ and it is likely that each group was aware of the theology and scriptural hermeneutic of the other. Thus, I find it more difficult than Strecker to rule out the Marcionite influence on the development and emergence of the false passages theory in the Pseudo-Clementines. Even if there were other groups active alongside – or even within – the Pseudo-Clementines' community, the fourth-century Homilist generates his text with Marcionite arguments in mind. The presentation of the various categories of false passages found within the *Homilies* appears purposeful and contrary to Marcionite theology.²⁴

Schoeps' views on the false passages theory are strikingly different from those of Strecker. The focus of Schoeps' larger analysis of early Christianity and the Pseudo-Clementines is that this corpus originated within the Ebionite community. Like Strecker, he argues that the *KP* was incorporated within the Basic Writing, the proposed basis of the *Recognitions* and *Homilies*. However, Schoeps diverges from Strecker by claiming that the false passages theory was developed early in Christian history and was part of the original Ebionite documents like the *KP*.²⁵ The false passages theory, Schoeps claims, derived from the Ebionite exegesis of Matt

²² A similar point is also found in Strecker's analysis of the *Didascalia* ("On the Problem of Jewish Christianity") found in the appendix to Walter Bauer's *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, 253 [256] especially n.35 where Strecker observes that the *Didascalia* even claims that there are multiple groups that are considered heretical.

²³ Strecker and Irmscher, "The Pseudo-Clementines," 485.

²⁴ See the analysis below.

²⁵ Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity: Factional Disputes in the Early Church* (trans. Douglas Hare; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 77.

5:17-18 and 15:1-14.²⁶ “The really creative contribution of the Ebionites to religion lay in their internalization of the Old Testament law. On the one hand they wanted to purge it of falsifications, and so they abbreviated and lightened it; on the other hand, they wanted to augment it and make it more difficult by intensifying that which was essential.”²⁷ Schoeps even goes so far as to claim that the recognition of problematic passages was common in the first few centuries. The Ebionites worked to appropriate this teaching for themselves in order to provide a version of the false passages theory that would be accepted within the community, thereby validating its message by marketing the false passages hermeneutic as an esoteric teaching of Christ.²⁸

Schoeps comments on the connection between the false passages theory and the Marcionites. He explains that the Ebionites, Marcion, the rabbis, and later the *Didascalia* were reacting to similar means of scriptural interpretation.²⁹ Yet nowhere does Schoeps argue that the Pseudo-Clementines are reacting to Marcion, probably since he assigns the false passages theory to a date earlier than Marcion himself.³⁰ In Schoeps’ view, there were multiple Jewish and Jewish Christian groups that were simultaneously and independently recognizing, and attempting to provide a solution for, the same contradictions in scripture. The notion of false passages was an idea that was simply part of the atmosphere of the early centuries.³¹

I am not convinced by Schoeps’ explanation for the false passages phenomenon in early Christianity. He points out the several solutions to the contradictory nature of certain biblical passages and corresponding issues that have survived in textual form. Many of these explanations contain significant overlap indicating that these groups had some level of contact with each other, or at least had some exposure – whether in written or oral form – to the ideas of

²⁶ Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity*, 76-78; *idem*, *Theologie und Geschichte*, 148-150.

²⁷ Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity*, 76.

²⁸ Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte*, 151-152. Schoeps suggests that the false passages theory may have emerged as early as the composition of the Gospel of Matthew (150).

²⁹ Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte*, 149, 176-179; *idem*, *Jewish Christianity*, 94-98.

³⁰ Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte*, 161.

³¹ Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte*, 187.

the other group. Schoeps even states that the idea of *deuterosis* in the Didascalia is simply the false passages theory of the Ebionites “in new garb,” indicating that there was some connection between the communities.³² However, this explanation does not reflect the complex nature of the issue. In general, there are certain basic similarities among the false scripture writings. Yet, the details contain numerous differences that preclude the idea of literary dependency.³³ Furthermore, the similarity among the false scripture writings could have arisen from a common enemy, namely the Marcionites. Each of the three false scripture writings would have had some exposure to Marcionite ideas. Ptolemy likely knew Marcion while both men lived in Rome, and the Pseudo-Clementines and the Didascalia appear to originate in Syria where Marcionites were active. Yet, even though Schoeps claims that the false passages idea arose earlier than Marcion’s ministry, it is probable that certain elements of the false passages argument was a response to the powerful influence of Marcion.³⁴ Both Marcion and the false passages argument polemicize against some of the same theological points, such as the continued practice of sacrifice and the apparent polytheism of the scriptures. In effect, although Schoeps suggests a variety of origins for the false passages argument, a simpler solution exists by claiming that the false passages argument evolved as a counter-argument against Marcionite theology.

In summary, Schoeps claims that the false passages theory originated early in a Jewish Christian, Ebionite community associated with the Gospel of Matthew. The false passages represent one of a handful of interpretative approaches to the problematic sections of the Jewish scriptures originating within various social groups. Each group’s explanation emerged independently. According to Strecker, the false passages theory developed during a period when Jewish (rabbinic) and Gnostic interpretations reflect an acute awareness of the need to explain the nature of the contradictions in scripture. He also suggests the false passages theory should be located to a later stratum of the Pseudo-Clementines. In his estimation, the theory was not only a defense against Marcionite criticism of the Bible but served to discount the theology of various Gnostic groups as well.

³² Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte*, 179-180.

³³ See chapter five for a full discussion of the issue of literary dependency and intertextuality among the false scripture writings.

³⁴ Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte*, 177.

In order to adequately assess these hypotheses, a full investigation of the false passages strategy of the Pseudo-Clementines is required. I will begin with a discussion of the nature of the false passages along with the means of discerning them, as outlined by the Homilist. After an in-depth analysis of the various categories of false passages, I will engage the issue of identity construction and the false passages in the conclusion.

The complicated history of source criticism and the Pseudo-Clementines has been succinctly summarized in a number of important articles and books by F. Stanley Jones. In particular, his two-part article, “The Pseudo-Clementines: A History of Research” has become the standard summary for non-specialists as well as Pseudo-Clementines experts.³⁵ As Jones’ work illustrates, there is little agreement over the various models of how the Pseudo-Clementines were generated. “This situation exists partially because PsCl studies are entangled in a notorious web of critical, and perhaps even abstruse, hypotheses.”³⁶ 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. With this notion in mind, my work corresponds with more recent Pseudo-Clementine studies that argue that the value of the Pseudo-Clementines relates to areas of research other than revealing sources – both actual and theoretical.³⁷ I intend to work only with the extant version of one of the Pseudo-Clementine writings, the *Homilies*, in a rhetorical fashion in order to evaluate the manner in which the theory

³⁵ Jones, “A History of Research I and II.”

³⁶ Jones, “A History of Research I,” 1.

³⁷ “I would like to suggest that future scholarship might profitably continue this trend toward redaction, narrative, and rhetorical analysis of the Pseudo-Clementines” (Kelley, *Knowledge & Religious Authority in the Pseudo-Clementines*, 25). In addition, Annette Reed’s “‘Jewish Christianity’ and the ‘Parting of the Ways,’” in *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (ed. Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck; 2003), 189-231 (224-231) also demonstrates an interest in moving away from the interest in source criticism and toward an understanding of why fourth-century Christians would rework and transmit the previous material in what are now known as the *Recognitions* and *Homilies*.

of the false passages influenced the construction and maintenance of group identity in the early fourth century.³⁸

2. The *Homilies* and the False Passages

As mentioned, this chapter will focus on the *Homilies* and the false passages.³⁹ Some scholars argue that the *Homilies* is characterized by two central interests.⁴⁰ The first is the debate between Peter and Simon. This debate seems to represent a struggle between Christianity and Marcionite beliefs. The second concern is a debate between Christianity and pagan religion, represented by Clement and his siblings and Appion and Faustus, respectively.⁴¹ The false passages play a key role within each of these debates. By recognizing spurious scripture, according to the *Homilies*, a true follower of Christ is able to navigate through the mistaken ideas of Marcion as well as understand the negative consequences of engaging in pagan practices. The discussion of false passages in the Jewish scriptures is one way in which social and religious identity was constructed and maintained in the Pseudo-Clementine community. The false passages represent a particular interpretation of the Jewish scriptures that influenced the theology and the religious life of the community. In order to describe the type of identity negotiated by the *Homilies*, the false passages must first be investigated.

In this work, I assume that a community existed that produced and utilized the Pseudo-Clementine literature. Although the writings themselves do not overtly indicate that they are part of any particular sectarian group, I believe a case can be made for the existence of such a community even if the exact dimensions of such a group are almost impossible to determine. That the Pseudo-Clementines have survived in two central documents whose contents so closely resemble each other is an indication for the existence of two separate communities that used these writings. The reason for producing two adaptations of a Basic Writing (the *Homilies* and

³⁸ The approximate date of the *Homilies*.

³⁹ English translations of the *Homilies* are taken (with some adaptation) from Smith's version in the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* vol. 8.

⁴⁰ Charles Bigg, "The Clementine Homilies," in *Studia Biblica et Ecclesiastica: Essays Chiefly in Biblical and Patristic Criticism*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1890), 157-193.

⁴¹ Bigg, "The Clementine Homilies," 158-159.

the *Recognitions*) – not to mention the additional shorter Pseudo-Clementine writings – might be to encapsulate the varying ideas of members of a community who did not agree on the proper presentation and interpretation of those ideas. In this scenario, the *Recognitions* and *Homilies* represent varying constituents of the same larger community. The theory that the *Homilies* represents a less “orthodox” group than the one behind the *Recognitions* has been previously argued.⁴² I find it plausible to assume a community behind these writings. It is my supposition that an investigation into the facets of the false passages theory of the *Homilies* can illuminate the character of the community who used this text. This chapter is devoted to understanding the theological and social identity of that community and how its members utilized the false passages theory to construct their identity apart from those perceived as outsiders.

2.1. The Nature of the False Passages

The false passages theory is one of the central elements of scriptural interpretation in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*. The *Homilies* relates that there are some passages in the Jewish scriptures that are false (ψευδῆ) or spurious (νόθου) (*Hom.* 2.51.1; 3.17.2, etc.). They are not original to God’s law which is “a perpetual law to all, which neither can be abrogated by enemies nor is vitiated by any impious one, nor is concealed in any place, but which can be read by all” (*Hom.* 8.10.3; *ANF* 8:272).⁴³ Although the intention or spirit of God’s law is innately invulnerable, the same cannot be said of the written scriptures that claim to contain God’s teaching. The scriptures contain both the written form of God’s law as well as the false passages. The scriptures have been interpolated with falsehoods against God. “For the scriptures have had joined to them many falsehoods against God on this account” (*Hom.* 2.38.1).⁴⁴ Specifically, the false passages theory targets contradictory writings against God and the patriarchs, the institution of the sacrificial cult of the Jewish temple, and the failure of the prophecy of this age.⁴⁵

⁴² See Jones, “A History of Research II,” 75-79.

⁴³ νόμον αἰώνιον ὠρίσεν τοῖς ὅλοις, μήτε πολέμῳ ἐμπρησθῆναι δυνάμενον μήθ’ ὑπὸ ἄσεβοῦς τινος ὑπονοθεύομενον μήτε ἐνὶ τόπῳ ἀποκεκρυμμένον, ἀλλὰ πᾶσιν ἀναγνωσθῆναι δυναμενον.

⁴⁴ πολλὰ γὰρ ψευδῆ κατὰ τοῦ θεοῦ προσέλαβον αἱ γραφαὶ λόγῳ τούτῳ.

⁴⁵ These categories will be individually treated in their respective sections below.

A portion of Peter's first debate with Simon deals with the nature of these problematic verses. When Simon delays his debate with Peter, Clement takes the opportunity to learn more about the claim regarding false verses in the scriptures (*Hom.* 2.41-53). He asks Peter about Simon's attack on God's omnipotence as well as the apparent contradictions in the scriptures. Peter responds by claiming that since it was a man, a being whose nature lacks foreknowledge, who penned the scriptures it is not possible for him to compose an account as if he knew exactly how all things came to be (*Hom.* 2.49.1-3). Only God would have this information. If the author was a prophet, his gift of prophecy must have been given to him by one who has it to give (i.e. God) (*Hom.* 2.50.1-3). Moses was not responsible for a written account of the law; having foreseen the corruptibility of the scriptures, he transmitted the law – without any spurious additions – only to the seventy elders (*Hom.* 2.38.2). However, since the scriptures contain contradictory passages, the author must have been affected by a force other than God. Thus, even though the false passages were actually written by human hands, it is the evil one who is the ultimate cause of these portions of the scriptures.

The false passages are one aspect of the doctrine of the syzygies, or pairs. The Homilist explains that God divided all things into pairs of opposites (*Hom.* 2.15.1). ὡς γὰρ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ τὰ πρῶτα κρείττονα, τὰ δεύτερα ἥττονα, ἐπ' ἀνθρώπων τὸ ἐναντίον εὐρίσκομεν, τὰ πρῶτα χείρονα, τὰ δεύτερα κρείττονα (*Hom.* 2.16.2).⁴⁶ The Homilist lists other examples such as ignorance existing before knowledge or the state of the temporary present world in distinction to the enduring heavenly realm that will be (*Hom.* 2.15.2; 2.17.1-5; 2.33.1-4). The syzygies are also evident in the brothers in the biblical narratives, such as Cain and then Abel, Ishmael and then Isaac, Esau and then Jacob (*Hom.* 2.16.1-7). In the Pseudo-Clementine narrative, Simon typically arrives at a location first but quickly followed by Peter. The hierarchy of the two figures, then, emerges through the journeys and debates of Peter and Simon: Peter's knowledge concerning the Jewish scriptures is superior to that of Simon. Although the authentic words of God came first, they are paired with the false passages at some later point. At the same time, the oral version of God's law was superior to the later written version which was corrupted

⁴⁶ “For whereas from Him the greater things come first, and the inferior second, we find the opposite in men – the first worse, and the second superior.”

by the interpolation of spurious passages.⁴⁷ Furthermore, the doctrine of the syzygies serves two other purposes within the Homilies. First, the doctrine introduces the notion that there are authentic and inauthentic things in the world. The Homilist uses the syzygies idea to present a dichotomous worldview for his audience. Second, the written and corruptible scripture is a later inferior distortion of the pure teaching of God.

A closer examination of the connection between the doctrine of the syzygies and the false passages leads to some ambiguity. The false passages clearly state the opposite of the authentic verses (*Hom.* 3.46.1; *ANF* 8:247). Yet, as explained above, the false passages were added to the Jewish scriptures at a later point, effectively reversing the typical order of the inferior and the superior. However, a solution to this problem does exist. The spurious verses are, in part, a product of false prophecy. The present age is a female age and, according to the author, inferior (*Hom.* 2.15.3). Eve was the first prophetess and was the first to give birth. All people are born of woman and therefore part of the feminine cosmic system. The true prophet is a son of man and bears true prophecy about the world to come (*Hom.* 3.22.1-3; *ANF* 8:231-232). The male type of prophecy is superior (*Hom.* 3.23.1–3.27.3; *ANF* 8:242-243) and will constitute the next age of God’s rule. Thus, the false passages are a product of the earlier, inferior age – both of which are temporary.

The Homilist explains the origin of the false passages in the Jewish scriptures. As stated, the false passages are not part of God’s law but are later additions. More specifically, God’s law was successfully delivered to Moses at Sinai. Moses was then ordered by God to transmit the law and its explanations to the seventy elders so that they, too, could instruct the people (*Hom.* 2.38.1). However, after the law was written,⁴⁸ “certain falsehoods” (τινᾶ...ψευδῆ) against God were added under the direction of the wicked one (*Hom.* 2.38.1-2). The wicked one, then, is the ultimate cause of the false passages. Understanding his role in the cosmic order reveals the purpose of the false passages.

⁴⁷ Drijvers, “Adam and the True Prophet in the Pseudo-Clementines,” 316.

⁴⁸ This section does not specify whether Moses or the elders wrote the law. However, *Hom.* 3.47.1-4 (*ANF* 8:247) explains that Moses did not write the law based on the observation that the scriptures mention Moses’ death.

2.2. The Purpose of the False Passages

The Homilist explains that the wicked one has inserted these pericopes for “a righteous purpose” (δικαῖ τινὶ λόγῳ) (2.38.1). Furthermore, this happened according to the will of God (*Hom.* 3.40.2; *ANF* 8:246). The text claims that the devil is a faithful servant of God. He performs his duties, like those of the other angels and even the true prophet, out of loving service to God.⁴⁹ The devil, like the true prophet character of the Pseudo-Clementines, is a child of God, though the two are not on equal footing (*Hom.* 20.8.1-6; *ANF* 8:341-342). The true prophet and the devil act as God’s two hands. Both figures are able to influence only those people who show interest in them and participate in their ways (“sat down at the same table with them”) (*Hom.* 7.2-3; *ANF* 8:268). Both figures love and obey God, yet they demonstrate their love in different ways. Whereas the Homilist describes the true prophet as the provider of salvation for the faithful, he also describes the evil one as desiring the destruction of the impious and faithless (*Hom.* 3.5.2-4; *ANF* 8:239). The role of the evil one, then, is to discern the faithful from the wicked. According to the *Homilies*, the devil’s tool for distinguishing humanity is the false passages.⁵⁰

The Homilist has devised a clever explanation for the spurious words. The false passages are mixed with the genuine portions in order to test humanity (*Hom.* 18.20.2; *ANF* 8:329). The design of the false passages is to discern the faithful who love God from those who are convicted

⁴⁹ The Homilist’s view on Satan is quite interesting. In this text, Satan does not oppose God but instead is a servant whose faithfulness is equal to that of Christ. It seems that the Homilist engages the issue of theodicy to show that God is blameless (*Hom.* 19.8.3-4; *ANF* 8:336) and presents a fairly unique explanation for the cosmos via the false passages theory. The attitude toward Satan in the *Homilies* might reflect a literal approach to the Jewish scriptures. Books like Job (1:6) and Deuteronomy (32:8-9) explain that Satan was a member of the heavenly court whose duties often involved interrupting humans’ faith in God (see especially 1 Kings 22:9, Zechariah 3:1-9, 1 Chronicles 21.1). Satan’s character undergoes some alteration between the composition of the earliest Jewish scriptures and first-century Christian writings where he and his forces become the opposition to God and his host. The biblical writings offer little explanation on how Satan’s role was so abruptly altered, and countless articles and books are devoted to the topic. See Elaine Pagels’ *The Origin of Satan* (New York: Random House, 1995); Henry A. Kelly’s *Satan: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006); Neil Forsyth’s *Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1989).

⁵⁰ Within the Pseudo-Clementine community, the false passages serve the similar purpose of discerning the faithful from the wicked, the obedient from the rebellious. See the conclusion of this chapter for a more detailed discussion.

for entertaining and believing negative ideas about God (*Hom.* 3.47.1-2; *ANF* 8:247). “For the scriptures have had joined to them many falsehoods against God...after a little the written law had added to it certain falsehoods contrary to the law of God...the wicked one having dared to work this for some righteous purpose...that those might be convicted who should dare to listen to the things written against God...” (*Hom.* 2.38.1-2; *ANF* 8:236).⁵¹ According to the Homilist, impious people will search for those few statements in the scriptures that are seemingly against God, leading their audience to believe these statements due to their ignorance and thereby become “outcasts” from God’s kingdom (*Hom.* 2.40.3; *ANF* 8:237).

At one point in the story, Clement questions Peter as to why the existence of false passages should be thought of as a benefit (*Hom.* 3.5.1; 3.4.4; *ANF* 8:239). Peter responds by explaining that evil has demanded that falsehoods be inserted within scripture. Since God loves the wicked one (Satan) and the good one (Christ) equally,⁵² God is not inclined to deny either. The central difference between the two figures is that the wicked one desires the destruction of the impious while the good one desires repentance for all, though only saves “only those who know God” (μόνους τοὺς ἐγνωκότας τὸν θεόν) (*Hom.* 3.5.2-4; *ANF* 8:239).⁵³ Clement’s question is didactic; the exchange between Clement and Peter on this matter raises the issue for the intended audience. The answer becomes relevant for the community’s identity: those who reject the false passages are true members of the community while those who embrace the spurious sections are outsiders – even if they are present within the larger Pseudo-Clementine community. Simon is a key servant of the devil since he works to distract the impious with falsehoods and distinguish them from the faithful who deserve their place within the community. He also functions as a rhetorical foil for those in the community who entertain the false implications of the spurious passages.

⁵¹ πολλὰ γὰρ ψευδῆ κατὰ τοῦ θεοῦ προσέλαβον αἱ γραφαὶ...μετ’ οὐ πολὺ γραφεῖς ὁ νόμος προσέλαβέν τινα καὶ ψευδῆ κατὰ τοῦ μόνου θεοῦ...τοῦτο τοῦ πονηροῦ δικαίᾳ τινὶ λόγῳ ἐνεργῆσαι τετολμηκότος...ὅπως ἐλεγχθῶσιν τινες τολμῶσιν τὰ κατὰ τοῦ θεοῦ γραφέντα.

⁵² These dichotomous figures represent Satan and the true prophet as well as Simon and Peter.

⁵³ See also *Hom.* 3.6.1-5 for the reward of the faithful and the punishment of the impious.

Simon is not the only straw man for wickedness. As servants of the devil, the demons also play a role in the discernment of the righteous from the faithful. Utilizing a version of the Watcher tale found in literary traditions like Genesis 6, 1 Enoch 1-36, and Jubilees, the Homilist relates that demons were once angels who descended to earth.⁵⁴ They had witnessed the lustfulness and ingratitude of humanity and desired to punish humans. However, upon transmuting into human flesh, they became subject to the same passions as other humans. They mated with humans and created a race of destructive giants that were eventually flooded from the earth. Since their nature was part angel, their spirits survived the destruction of their flesh; they became the demons who bring suffering upon humanity (*Hom.* 8.9.1–8.18.2; *ANF* 8:272-274). A law was given to the demons. They were barred from harming anyone who does not subject himself to the demons, especially by sacrificing to them, worshipping them, partaking of their table, shedding blood, or tasting flesh or any unclean animal (*Hom.* 8.18.2–8.19.4; *ANF* 8:273-274).⁵⁵ The demons are unable to affect the faithful as long as humans do not give themselves over as slaves (*Hom.* 9.23.1; *ANF* 8:279). To ensure this protection, the community is advised to refrain from the table of demons (avoid idolatry), remain chaste, and be baptized (*Hom.* 9.23.1-2; *ANF* 8:279). Maintaining a proper religious and social life, combined with baptism, prevents the demons from affecting the faithful. Those who are ignorant of the law established over the demons have been corrupted (*Hom.* 8.20.2; *ANF* 8:274).

The Homilist argues that outsiders are under the power of demons since they participate in the table of demons, eating food dedicated to idols, believing in other gods, and acting impurely (*Hom.* 11.15.1-8; *ANF* 8:287-288). Even though the Gentiles as a group may be under demonic influence, this is not a possibility for those who truly worship God – not just in name but in practice. This is not to say that the faithful do not suffer, only that their suffering is not the result of amicable relations with demons.

θεοσεβῆς γὰρ οὗτός ἐστιν, ὃν ἐγὼ φημι, ὃ ἄνω θεοσεβῆς, οὐχ ὅτι ἂν μόνον λέγεται, ὃ δὲ ἄνω ὡν τοῦ δοθέντος αὐτῷ νόμου ἐκτελεῖ τὰς προστάξεις. εἴαν τις ἀσεβῆς, εὐσεβῆς οὐκ ἐστιν. ὅπερ τρόπον εἴαν ὁ ἀλλόφυλος τὸν νόμον πράξῃ, Ἰουδαῖός ἐστιν, μὴ πράξας δὲ Ἕλληνας· ὁ γὰρ Ἰουδαῖος πιστεύων θεῷ ποιεῖ τὸν νόμον, δι' ἧς πίστεως καὶ τὰ ἄλλα τὰ ὀρεσιν εἰκότα καὶ βαροῦντα μεθίστησιν πάθη. ὃ δὲ μὴ ποιῶν τὸν νόμον

⁵⁴ See Annette Reed's *Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity: The Reception of Enochic Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005).

⁵⁵ Avoiding these practices is pleasing to God (*Hom.* 7.4.1-3).

δηλον ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ μὴ πιστεύειν θεῷ λειποτακτεῖ καὶ οὕτως ὡς οὐκ Ἰουδαῖος ἀμαρτωλὸς διὰ τὴν ἀμαρτίαν ἐπικρατεῖται ὑπὸ τῶν εἰς τὸ τιμωρεῖν τοὺς ἀμαρτάνοντας καθεστῶτων παθῶν. (Hom. 11.16.2-4; ANF 8:288)⁵⁶

Furthermore, demons do not appear to the Jews (*Hom.* 9.16.1; *ANF* 8:278). Peter explains that the Jews are safe from demons not because they have a different nature than Gentiles, but rather because they have a different faith (*Hom.* 9.20.1-2; *ANF* 8:279). The Homilist explains that the Jews encounter suffering so that their transgressions can be expiated during this life thus preparing them for the afterlife (*Hom.* 11.16.5; *ANF* 8:288). For the Homilist, knowledge of the false passages, and a clear rejection of them, identifies someone as part of the community of the faithful – whether he be a Jew or Gentile. The terms Jew and Gentile do not necessarily signify ethnic boundaries but communal borders. The Homilist implies that those who maintain God’s laws by discerning the true passages from the false ones are insiders, or Jews according to the Homilist. The opposite is true for Gentiles, or those who reject the false scripture argument. Thus, protection from the effects of Satan and the demons is dependent upon the proper identification and discernment of the false passages. The false passages serve to demarcate one group from another.

2.3. Discerning the False Passages

Even though the Homilist provides his audience with the means for this discernment, the knowledge of the false passages is presented as esoteric material. Peter explains to Simon that Jesus declared τὰ ἀπὸ αἰῶνος ἐν κρυπτῷ ἀξιόμοις παραδιδόμενα (*Hom.* 3.19.1; *ANF* 8:242).⁵⁷ Peter is hesitant to debate the issue with Simon in public since “the unlearned multitudes” (ἀμαθεῖς ὄχλους), confused about the additional spurious portions of the Bible, would grow suspicious of the scriptures. Such an outcome would accomplish Simon’s goal of

⁵⁶ “For he is a worshipper of God, of whom I speak, who is truly pious, not one who is such only by name but who really performs the commandments of the law that he has been given. If any one acts impiously, he is not pious. In like manner, if he who is of another tribe keeps the law, he is a Jew. But he who does not keep it is a Greek. For the Jew believes God and keeps the law, by which faith he removes also other sufferings, though like mountains and heavy. But the one who does not keep the law is clearly a deserter by not believing in God and thus is not a Jew but a sinner, since by his sin he is brought into subjection to those sufferings which are ordained for the punishment of sinners.”

⁵⁷ “the things which from the beginning were delivered in secret to the worthy.”

drawing people away from the faith. Peter would rather discuss the false passages in private (*Hom.* 2.39.1-4; *ANF* 8:236). However, considering that redemption depends on, at least in part, the correct identification and avoidance of the spurious writings, it is imperative that the faithful understand how to discern the true from the false passages. The ability to recognize the false passages provides the means to avoid sin against God (*Hom.* 2.40.4). As discussed in the previous section, redemption is not a corporate action for Jews or Gentiles. Instead, salvation is open to whoever is able to identify and reject the false passages. The esoteric knowledge of the false passages must have been general knowledge within the author's community, likely taught to its individual members, but withheld from outsiders. Although the false passages are discussed by characters within the text, these characters represent the implied audience. Members of the author's community are privy to the secret about the false passages, a secret presumable kept from those outside the elect community.

It is possible that the *Homilies* provides the vehicle for social education. By relating the narrative of Clement and Peter's adventures, the theological debates that are paired with the narrative function to inform the community about the proper understanding of the scriptures. For the members of the believing community, the false passages theory is a hermeneutical device that buttresses their exegesis of scripture. By having Peter explain the false passages theory and claim its origin in the teachings of Christ, the Homilist is able to validate the exegetical theory as well as justify the rejection of certain passages of the scriptures that do not cohere with the community's tradition.

As discussed above, the *Homilies* states that any passage that is contrary to the notion that God is supreme and perfect must be false. The scripture that was delivered by God to Moses and then transmitted orally to the seventy elders was uniform in nature and without contradiction. However, as many interpreters had discovered, there are passages that are problematic since they appear to contradict other portions of the biblical writings. Aware of this situation, the Homilist outlines two methods by which the false passages can be identified and ignored: (1) observing contradictions among the Jewish scriptures alone and (2) comparing the words of the true prophet with the Jewish scriptures.

The first method is found by comparing passages within the Jewish scriptures. Anyone who searches the scriptures will be able to find apparent contradictions which can then be manipulated to produce almost any dogma one might wish to create. πάντα γὰρ αἱ γραφαί

λέγουσιν, ἵνα μηδεὶς τῶν ἀγνωμόνως ζητούντων τὸ ἀληθὲς εὕρῃ, ἀλλ' ὁ βούλεται (*Hom.* 3.10.4; *ANF* 8:240).⁵⁸ Therefore, confidence cannot be placed in the scriptures alone (*Hom.* 3.9.1; *ANF* 8:240).

The Homilist devotes a considerable amount of space to listing the qualities of God, all of which are positive (*Hom.* 2.43.1–2.45.2; *ANF* 8:246-247). Having demonstrated that God is essentially good, any statement to the contrary must be wrong. Such verses exist within scripture; therefore, these are false passages. When an apparent contradiction arises, those verses that disparage God or his servants must logically be false. As will be explained shortly, these passages involve the representation of polytheism in the scriptures, prophecy, sacrifices, and the Jewish monarchy, and the slanderous descriptions of the patriarchs. The Homilist explains that since the Jewish scriptures depicts God and the patriarchs in both positive and negative manners, but God and his faithful servants are perceived as only good (of course!), then the only logical conclusion is that the negative depictions are falsehoods.

The Homilist argues that the second way to discern the true from the false is by following the teaching of the true prophet. Although this figure can be somewhat ambiguous, especially regarding his relationship with God, he is essentially identified as Jesus Christ (*Hom.* 3.49.3; *ANF* 8:247). This identification, however, is too simplistic to do justice to the theory of the true prophet.

The figure of the true prophet in the Pseudo-Clementines has received significant attention from scholars. Han J.W. Drijvers' "Adam and the True Prophet in the Pseudo-Clementines"⁵⁹ provides an excellent analysis of the pivotal role of the true prophet in the Basic Writing. Drijvers argues that the true prophet is the instrument by which the Pseudo-Clementine interpretation of scripture can be realized. Only by believing in the true prophet can someone gain discernment of the true and false portions of the scriptures (*Hom.* 3.49.2; *ANF* 8:247). This knowledge has been passed down to Christ's disciples (*Hom.* 3.49.2-3; *ANF* 8:247).⁶⁰

⁵⁸ "For the scriptures say all manner of things in order that no one of those who inquire unknowingly may discover the truth, but rather what he wishes..."

⁵⁹ Drijvers, "Adam and the True Prophet in the Pseudo-Clementines," 314-323.

⁶⁰ Drijvers, "Adam and the True Prophet in the Pseudo-Clementines," 320.

The true prophet has appeared multiple times in numerous forms throughout the ages (*Hom.* 3.20.2). Adam, Moses, and Jesus are all manifestations of the true prophet. The true prophet knows all things that were, are, and will be (*Hom.* 2.6.1; *ANF* 8:229; 3.12.1-3; *ANF* 8:240). He is the source of all truth (*Hom.* 2.12.1-2; *ANF* 8:230-231; 3.11.1-2; *ANF* 8:240) and the only means to find the path to salvation (*Hom.* 1.19.1; *ANF* 8:227). For example, Adam foresaw the character of his two sons' relationship and named them appropriately (*Hom.* 3.25.1–26.6; *ANF* 8:243), Moses foresaw the corruption of the written version of the law (*Hom.* 3.47.4; *ANF* 8:247), and Christ predicted the destruction of the temple (*Hom.* 3.15.1–3; *ANF* 8:241; Matt 24:2, 34; Luke 19:43-44).

The Homilist offers a detailed account of how Jesus' words are used to discern the true from the spurious portions of the scriptures. During their debate, while Peter explains the existence of false passages to Simon, Simon asks how these “falsehoods” can be recognized. Peter indicates that περικοπή τις ἐν τῷ γραφέντι νόμῳ κατὰ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ πρόνοιαν ἀπταίστως ἐπεμνημονεύθη, ὡστ' ἂν σαφῶς δεῖξαι τῶν γεγραμμένων ποῖά ἐστιν ἀληθῆ, ποῖα δὲ ψευδη. (*Hom.* 3.48.2; *ANF* 8:247).⁶¹ The verse that serves as the hermeneutical skeleton key, as it were, to the false passages is Gen 49:10. “A ruler shall not fail from Judah, nor a leader from his thighs, until He come whose it is; and He is the expectation of the nations.” If someone is able to recognize the one who fulfills this prophecy and believes him, “he will know what of the Scriptures are true and what are false” (*Hom.* 3.49.1-2; *ANF* 8:247).⁶² Simon, realizing that Peter believes the anonymous figure to be Jesus, assents to this identification in order that Peter reveal the manner in which Jesus taught the discernment of scripture (*Hom.* 3.49.3; *ANF* 8:247). Ironically, Simon leaves for this very reason – he is afraid that Peter's use of scripture as taught

⁶¹ “a certain pericope has been recorded in the written law, according to the providence of God, remembered without fault, so as to show clearly which of the things written are true and which are false.”

⁶² I find it curious as to why the Homilist would choose this verse as the best choice of all the options available to demonstrate his point. Genesis 49:10 has no obvious connection with the notion of false passages or the discernment of scripture. It may be that this verse was important to the Pseudo-Clementine community regarding some other issue and its appearance in this critical moment in the debate between Peter and Simon serves that other agenda, whatever it may have been. Nevertheless, as it stands the Homilist finds the importance of the verse as an illustration of a later manifestation of the true prophet figure (see discussion below).

by Jesus is overwhelming his own arguments (*Hom.* 3.58.1–3; *ANF* 8:249). The rhetorical effect of this account on the target audience serves to illustrate the superiority of the author’s teaching over other philosophical or theological options. Peter, the representative of the Pseudo-Clementine community, is able to confound his opponent by means of the proper understanding of scripture.

Peter relates an account of Jesus debating some Sadducees over the proper interpretation of certain tricky parts of scripture. A group of Sadducees attempt to trap Jesus in an interpretive quagmire by asking whose wife a woman would be in the afterlife, if she had been widowed by numerous husbands while alive. Jesus responds by stating that the Sadducees do not know the true things of scripture and are ignorant (*Matt* 22:23-33). Peter notes that Christ’s conversation implied that there are both true and false parts of scripture. The interpretation of this story makes up one of the foundations of the false passage argument in the *Homilies*. Jesus’ statement, as the Homilist argues, illustrates a type of midrashic extrapolation which indicates that if there are true portions of the Jewish scriptures there must also be false portions.⁶³ In a more cryptic manner, Peter also refers to Jesus’ knowledge of the true and false elements of scripture by citing an apparent *logion* of Christ, “Be prudent money-changers.”⁶⁴ The interpretation of this *logion*, according to Peter, specifically refers to the proper discernment of true and false passages.⁶⁵ Not only was Christ aware of the false passages, but he also passed this knowledge to Peter in a similar way that Peter now transmits it to Clement.

According to Peter, Christ also verified the existence of the false passages by stating “I have come not to destroy the law”⁶⁶ and “The heaven and the earth shall pass away, but one jot or tittle shall not pass from the law” (*Hom.* 3.51.1, 3 quoting *Matt* 5:17-18; *ANF* 8:248). Yet at

⁶³ For a comparison of the Pseudo-Clementines’ hermeneutic with that of the rabbis, see Schoeps’ *Theologie und Geschichte*, 176-179 and *Jewish Christianity*, 94-98.

⁶⁴ “Γίνεσθε τραπεζῆται δόκιμοι” *Hom.* 3.50.2. Like the previous quotation error of *Matt* 22:29, this *logion* also appears in *Hom.* 2.51.1. In both instances, Rehm notes that this statement likely derives from an apocryphal source. The phrase “Be prudent money-changers” which seems to be an apocryphal *logion*, is found three times in the *Homilies* (2.51.1; 3.50.2; 18.20.2-3). Schoeps states that this curious phrase was “a slogan” among the Ebionites for the false passages theory (Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity*, 79; *idem*, *Theologie und Geschichte*, 152).

⁶⁵ The same interpretation is understood by the Homilist in the other appearances of the *logion*.

⁶⁶ The absence of “and the prophets” from the Matthean account reflects the Homilist’s acknowledgement of false prophecies. See further analysis of prophecy below.

the same time, Jesus did not adhere to all of the Mosaic laws. The ones that Jesus did not follow are considered defunct by the Homilist since they “did not belong to the law” (*Hom.* 3.51.2-3; *ANF* 8:248). Peter goes on to explain that some sacrifices and prophecies have passed away because they were not divine in origin. Peter cites Matthew 15:13 to further support his argument: “Every plant which the heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up.” The author implies that the false passages are to be expunged since they are not divine regulations (*Hom.* 3.52.1-2; *ANF* 8:248). Only the true prophet can provide the proper teaching that is able to save people from following the false passages.⁶⁷ The Homilist cites John 10:9 (“I am the gate of life; he who enters through me enters into life”), as well as Matthew 11:28 (Come unto me, all who labor”), John 10:3 (My sheep shall hear my voice”) and 7:7 (“Seek and find”) as indications of Jesus’ call to look deeper into the scriptures in order to find the truth (*Hom.* 3.52.2-3; *ANF* 8:248).

Other important citations stem from Acts 3:22 and 7:37 (see also Deut 17:15-19). Ἐγὼ εἶμι περὶ οὗ Μωυσῆς προεφήτευσεν εἰπὼν· Προφήτην ἔγερει ὑμῖν κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν ἐκ τῶν ἀδελφῶν ὑμῶν ὡσπερ καὶ ἐμέ· αὐτοῦ ἀκούετε κατὰ πάντα. ὅς ἂν δὲ μὴ ἀκούσῃς τοῦ προφήτου ἐκείνου, ἀποθανεῖται (*Hom.* 3.53.3; *ANF* 8:248).⁶⁸ The significance of this verse relates to Peter’s claim that Jesus is the prophet whom Moses referenced in Gen 49:10 – a verse Peter cites in his discussion with Simon as the key verse for the discernment of the true from the false portions of scripture (*Hom.* 3.49.1; *ANF* 8:247). The Homilist’s theory of false passages provided an explanation for how the scriptures contain these contradictions while at the same time are valid and true.

2.4. Categories of the False Passages

In their analysis of the *Pseudo-Clementines*, Schoeps and Strecker offer different taxonomies for the false passages. Schoeps organizes the false passages under three headings: the

⁶⁷ See also *Hom.* 3.54.1.

⁶⁸)“I am he concerning whom Moses prophesied, saying A prophet shall the Lord our God raise unto you from your brothers, just as to me: Him hear in all things; and whosoever will not hear that Prophet shall die.”

sacrificial cult, the validity of prophecy, and improper writings.⁶⁹ On the other hand, Strecker categorizes the false passages under five labels: “anthropopathein” or the attribution of human emotions to God, polytheism, the prophets, sacrifice and the temple, and the king.⁷⁰ Following the more specific model of Strecker, I will present five categories of false passages found in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*: polytheism and the defense of God’s majesty, the defense of the patriarchs, sacrifice and other cultic practices, prophecy and prophets, and the monarchy.

Strecker points out that there were many writers throughout history, such as Philo and the rabbis, who offered a host of explanations for the problematic passages in the Jewish scriptures. Simon utilized many of these problematic passages in his discussions with Peter. Conveniently, these topics provide Peter the opportunity to properly explain the nature of the pericopes by means of the notion of false passages. In this way, the Homilist frames the narrative as a mechanism to transmit his interpretive teachings and religious education.

2.4.1. *Polytheism and the defense of God’s majesty*

The first category of the false passages investigated here is the polemical portions of the Jewish scriptures marshaled in order to attack the omnipotence of God as well as support polytheistic ideas. As Strecker observes, God’s omnipotence as well as the existence of gods other than Yahweh were issues commonly engaged by the many commentators on the Bible.⁷¹ Early in the Clementine narrative Simon begins a debate with Peter by demonstrating that the Jewish scriptures themselves testify to multiple deities as well as the fallacies of the God within them, all in the hope of luring people away from the faith (*Hom.* 3.3.2-3; 3.38.1-2; *ANF* 8:239; 245). Peter’s response is guided by a single notion: πᾶν λεχθὲν ἢ γραφὲν κατὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ψευδὸς ἐστὶν (*Hom.* 2.40.1).⁷² Peter teaches that the πασῶν οὖν μείζων ἐστὶν ἀσέβεια τὸ τὸν μόνον πάντων καταλείψεντα δεσπότην πολλοὺς τοὺς οὐκ ὄντας ὡς ὄντας σέβειν θεοῦς

⁶⁹ Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte*, 155-176.

⁷⁰ Strecker, *Judenchristentum*, 166-185.

⁷¹ Strecker, *Judenchristentum*, 167.

⁷² “Everything that is spoken or written against God is false.”

(*Hom.* 9.1.2; *ANF* 8:275)⁷³; those who entertain the notion that there are other gods will face eternal punishment (*Hom.* 3.38.3; *ANF* 8:245).

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 τῆ τοῦ τὰ πάντα
κτίσαντος θεοῦ χειρὶ ἐναντία φαίνονται. (*Hom.* 3.46.1; *ANF* 8:247)⁷⁴

Simon's arguments and interpretation of scripture, likely a reflection of Marcionite theology active in Syria,⁷⁵ must have been perceived by the Homilist as a serious threat since the notions of polytheism and the fallacy of God constitute such a large part of the *Homilies'* narrative.

Simon is prepared to argue that the God of the Jewish scriptures is not the supreme God but that there is another "unknown and supreme" (*Hom.* 3.38.1-3; 2.22.5; *ANF* 8:233; 245) – a statement reminiscent of Marcion's notion of the unknowable Father.⁷⁶ Furthermore, he maintains that God would not consider such statements blasphemous since even God has made such implications in the scriptures, referring to the discussion between God and the anonymous other beings in Genesis 3 (*Hom.* 16.5.3; 6.1-3; *ANF* 8:313, 262). The Homilist provides Simon with a lengthy list of scriptural references to multiple deities (*Hom.* 16.6.1-12; 11.1-2; *ANF* 8:313, 284).⁷⁷ These passages may have been commonly disputed by the Homilist and his antagonists since Peter then responds with his own list of passages that refer to God's uniqueness and unity (*Hom.* 16.7.1-9; *ANF* 8:313-314). Each character continues to debate the other in a verbal battle of scriptural citations (*Hom.* 16.8.1-6; *ANF* 8:314) until Simon realizes they are at an impasse; the scriptures both discuss the existence of other gods and command that these other

⁷³ "greatest impiety of all is having forsaken the only Lord of all, and worshipping many, who are not gods, as if they were gods."

⁷⁴ Thus the sayings accusatory of the God who made the heaven are both rendered void by the opposite sayings which are alongside of them and are refuted by the creation. For they were not written by a prophetic hand. Wherefore also they appear opposite to the hand of God, who made all things."

⁷⁵ Han J.W. Drijvers, "East of Antioch," 3.

⁷⁶ E.g. Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.*, 5.16; *ANF* 3:463.

⁷⁷ For a helpful summary and analysis of the contradictory statements in the Jewish scriptures, see Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte*, 170-171.

gods be neither worshipped nor acknowledged. Simon asks, πρὸς τοῦτο τὶ δεῖ λογισασθαι ἢ ὅτι αὐταὶ ἡμᾶς αἰ γραφαὶ πλανῶσιν (*Hom.* 16.9.4; *ANF* 8:314).⁷⁸

Peter uses this moment as an opportunity to utilize the false passages theory as a solution. The scriptures do contain contradictions; readers are able to mold their own ideas from both the true and false statements. Yet if there are other gods, as some (spurious) passages claim, Peter inquires why these other deities do not appear (*Hom.* 16.10.1-10; *ANF* 8:314-315). The only conclusion Peter accepts is that there are no other gods besides the one of the scriptures. These seemingly spurious passages are nothing more than a test of the faithful – a test Peter claims he and his company have successfully passed. Οὕτως ἡμεῖς, ὡς Σίμων, οὐτε ἀπὸ γραφῶν οὐτε ὑφ’ ἑτέρου τινὸς σκανδαλισθῆναι δυνάμεθα οὐτε πολλοὺς θεοὺς ἀποδέξασθαι ἀπατώμεθα οὐδὲ λόγῳ τινὶ κατὰ τοῦ θεοῦ λεγομένῳ συντιθέμεθα (*Hom.* 16.13.6⁷⁹; *ANF* 8:315; see also 18.20.1-3; *ANF* 8:329). The other deities are, at best, nothing more than angels sent by the one God (*Hom.* 16.14.1-3; *ANF* 8:315-316). Peter describes the God of the scriptures as the only omnipotent deity who created all things (e.g. *Hom.* 2.45.1-2; *ANF* 8:237); any statement otherwise must constitute a false passage.

In addition, Simon argues that multiple gods are evident according to his cosmological notion that the supreme God sent two other gods into the world. The first was sent to create the world while the second was charged to provide the law (*Hom.* 3.2.2-3; *ANF* 8:239).⁸⁰ Peter counters this idea by arguing that Jesus was not a god nor did he ever make such a claim. He simply claimed to be the (begotten) son of God (*Hom.* 16.15.1–16.5; *ANF* 8:316). Despite Simon’s claim that the God of the Jewish scriptures was the lesser creator god, Peter demonstrates that the sacred writings do not support such a claim (*Hom.* 18.15.1-7; *ANF* 8:328).⁸¹

⁷⁸ “What conclusion ought we to come to in consequence of all this, but that the Scriptures themselves lead us astray?”

⁷⁹ “Thus we, Simon, can be led astray neither by the Scriptures nor by any one else; nor are we deceived into the admission of many gods, nor do we agree to any statement that is made against God.”

⁸⁰ Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.*, 1.19; *ANF* 3:284-285.

⁸¹ Schoeps states that this passage is a clear attack on Marcionite theology (*Theologie und Geschichte*, 160). In fact, he claims that this entire subsection of the false passages theory targets

In line with the preceding arguments, according to Simon, God is not portrayed in the scriptures as perfect (*Hom.* 3.39.1-5; *ANF* 8:245). Simon mentions that God is unaware of what is happening in Sodom and must descend to investigate the situation (Gen 18:21). God demonstrates the character traits of ignorance and jealousy by driving Adam from Eden in case he decides to eat from the tree of life (Gen 3:22). God's ignorance and repentance are illustrated in Gen 6:6 when God is upset at how the human experiment has panned out. God's needs are obvious from his need to smell the aroma of any animal sacrifices (Gen 8:21). Simon goes so far as to claim that God's wickedness can be seen in the tempting of Abraham (Gen 22:1).

Peter offers a solution to the various issues raised by Simon. He points out that if God is as wicked as Simon claims, then God would not accuse himself openly in the scriptures. Simon's assent to this point provides an opportunity for Peter to begin a focused investigation into the God of the Jewish scriptures (*Hom.* 3.40.1-3; *ANF* 8:246). Simon will only follow Peter's line of reasoning if Peter admits that if his investigation results in a demonstration of God's being described as fallible then Peter must accept this conclusion as correct. Peter replies that even if this would be the result, God's wickedness still would not be proven (*Hom.* 3.41.1-4; *ANF* 8:246). Peter argues that false passages have been inserted within the Jewish scriptures and thus the scriptures do attest to God's fallibility; however, the claims are grounded in spurious writing. Because they are degrading to God they cannot be true and therefore do not speak to God's actual character. Ὅσαι τῶν γραφῶν φωναὶ συμφωνοῦσιν τῷ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ γενομένῳ κτίσει, ἀληθεῖς εἰσιν, ὅσαι δὲ ἐναντία, ψευδεῖς τυγχάνουσιν (*Hom.* 3.42.3; *ANF* 8:246).⁸² Peter explains that God cannot be inferior even if the scriptures imply as much (*Hom.* 3.55.1-57.1; *ANF* 8:248-249). For example, God must have foreknowledge since someone had to provide this ability to Adam and Moses (*Hom.* 3.43.1-44.2; *ANF* 8:246-247). According to Peter, the true prophet has illustrated the same point: God does not swear (Matt 5:37), has foreknowledge (Matt 6:8, 32), sees all things (Matt 6:6), is good (Matt 7:9-11; 19:17 and parallels), does not require sacrifices (Matt 9:13; 12:7), and is the only God (Mark 12:29, with Deut 6:4).

the Marcionites (174, 176). As discussed above, Strecker argues that this section, if really from the KP source, was not focused on countering the Marcionites as much as it was interested in presenting a rational approach to scripture that engaged perhaps a variety of other interpreters (*Judenchristentum*, 167).

⁸² "Whatever sayings of the Scriptures are in harmony with the creation that was made by Him are true, but whatever are contrary to it are false."

Simon and Peter's debate functions to offer support for each figure's opinion. We can assume that the passages discussed were familiar in the author's community since the Homilist surely would not supply his opponents with the means of strengthening their position. Whereas the other categories of false passages are propaganda for the author's views, the dispute over God's omnipotence and uniqueness appears to represent the Homilist's encounters with those who presented an alternative interpretation of the Jewish scriptures. Simon's arguments parallel portions of Marcionite theology which attempted to demonstrate that the deity of the scriptures was a lesser, fallible being and an inferior version of another perfect god. Therefore, it is plausible that the false passages theory of the Pseudo-Clementines is directed at countering the influence of Marcionites within the Homilist's community.

2.4.2. *The character of the patriarchs*

As the Homilist staunchly defends the character and majesty of the singular God, he similarly preserves the reputation of the patriarchs of the scriptures. During one of the debates, Simon questions Peter about Jesus' statement that "No one knows the Father except the Son" (*Hom.* 18.13.2-3; *ANF* 8:327). If this were true, Simon inquires, how can Peter and others claim that the Father was known to Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses (*Hom.* 17.4.3; *ANF* 8:318-319; see also 18.13.1-6; *ANF* 8:327-328)? Simon has elsewhere argued that Adam was blind, without the knowledge of good and evil, and eventually transgresses against God and is subsequently banished from Eden (*Hom.* 3.39.1; *ANF* 8:245). For reasons that will be investigated below, these challenges are taken seriously by the Homilist, who takes a special interest in these famous patriarchs. When Peter implies that these statements are false and that others exist in the scriptures, Simon requests that Peter explain how to discover the false passages. After an extended discussion (some of which will be examined below) Peter concludes that "whatever sayings ascribe ignorance to Him, or anything else that is evil, being upset by other sayings which affirm the contrary, are proved to be false" (*Hom.* 3.43.3; *ANF* 8:246). Similar to the false passages about God in the preceding section, false passages can be discovered by noticing contradictions about the character of the patriarchs.

Charles Gieschen offers a detailed study of what he terms “the listing genre.”⁸³ This genre creates associations among particular heroes of the pentateuchal narratives who are considered “pillars” of righteousness and piety. He convincingly demonstrates that the listing of patriarchal characters – a list that has little fluctuation but typically includes Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses – functions as a rhetorical and apologetic device.⁸⁴ It serves as an encomium for the righteousness of not only the biblical characters but also those who consider themselves part of that spiritual lineage.

The phrasing of “the seven pillars of the world” (ἑπτὰ στύλους ὑπάρξαντας κόσμῳ) is specifically mentioned in *Hom.* 18.14.1 (*ANF* 8:327-328). These figures were mentioned in the preceding chapter of the *Homilies*. The *Homilies*’ list includes Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.⁸⁵ These figures are included in the *Homilies* as part of a proof for further examples of false passages in the scriptures. Since the men were exemplars of piety and righteousness, Peter explains, it is ludicrous to accept any negative aspects associated with their biblical biographies.

The Homilist devotes considerable attention to the figure of Adam. Through Peter’s debates with Simon, the Homilist explains that Adam is not to be perceived as a transgressor. He was created by God himself, made in God’s image, and thus could not have disobeyed God (*Hom.* 2.52.1). Since Adam possessed the power of foreknowledge, he would not need to eat from a tree to gain knowledge (*Hom.* 3.21.2; *ANF* 8:242). Anticipating Simon’s attack on Adam’s gift of foreknowledge, Peter argues (in a very circular fashion) that Adam must have possessed this gift (from God) since he properly named the animals (*Hom.* 3.21.1; *ANF* 8:242) as

⁸³ Charles Gieschen, “The Seven Pillars of the World: Ideal Figure Lists in the True Prophet Christology of the Pseudo-Clementines,” *Journal for the Study of Pseudepigrapha* 12 (1994): 47-82.

⁸⁴ Gieschen, “The Seven Pillars,” 58ff.

⁸⁵ Gieschen suggests that missing figures in a given list, such as the noticeable disregard of Moses here in *Hom* 18.14.1, could be due to the terse manner in which the figures are recounted. He explains that the list must have been so common that an exclusion of a figure here or there would be corrected on the part of the audience (56-57).

well as providing appropriate names for Cain (“jealousy”) and Abel (“grief”) (*Hom.* 3.25.1–3.26.6; *ANF* 8:243).⁸⁶

Besides Adam, Moses is the most regularly discussed patriarch in the *Homilies*. Moses is considered a prophet (*Hom.* 2.49.1–2.50.3; *ANF* 8:238). In fact, he is a manifestation of the true prophet. He was wise enough to foresee that if the law was written down it would become vulnerable to both corruption and abduction (*Hom.* 3.47.4; *ANF* 8:247).⁸⁷ Following the inferior Aaron, Moses constitutes the superior half of one syzygy-pair (*Hom.* 2.16.7). Furthermore, the Homilist insists that Moses could not have been a murderer or have been educated by an idolatrous priest since he was chosen by God to deliver the law (*Hom.* 2.25.3).⁸⁸ The Homilist observes that like the other manifestations of the true prophet, Adam and Jesus, Moses was able to foresee the future (*Hom.* 3.43.1-2; 3.47.1-4; *ANF* 8:246). Since the Homilist maintains that the teaching of Moses is equivalent to that of Christ (*Hom.* 8.5.1–7.5; *ANF* 8:271), Moses must have received an elevated position within the religious life of the community.⁸⁹

The other five pillars are mentioned less frequently, though their defense by the Homilist is not unimportant. Enoch is described as someone who “pleased God” (*Hom.* 17.4.3; *ANF* 8:318-319).⁹⁰ Noah was not a drunk since he was found righteous (*Hom.* 8.17.4; *ANF* 8:273) while the rest of humanity was not. Abraham is briefly mentioned by the Homilist as someone who did not live with three wives at once since he was given honors by God (*Hom.* 2.52.3; *ANF*

⁸⁶ Cain (‘envy’) was named because he would murder his brother out of envy while Abel (grief) was the first person whose death would require his parents to grieve (*Hom.* 3.42.7).

⁸⁷ The argument that Moses was somehow aware of the potential corruption of the written Torah is an interesting departure from the paradigms set forth in *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora* and the *Didascalia*. The latter texts portray Moses as an unwitting accomplice of the establishment of false scripture. The Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* denies that Moses was an accomplice to the institution of the false passages.

⁸⁸ Exod 2:11-22.

⁸⁹ Gieschen claims that the importance of Moses in the community “should be interpreted as part of a polemic against Marcionism and Pauline Christianity” (“The Seven Pillars,” 69 where he notes Schoeps’ similar point in *Jewish Christianity*, 66-67).

⁹⁰ That Enoch is not specifically attacked by Simon but is still defended by the Homilist further supports Gieschen’s larger idea that these seven pillars were commonly packaged together.

8:237). Isaac also appears in the text. As the greater part of his syzygy with Ishmael, he is described as blessed by God (*Hom.* 2.16.5-6; *ANF* 8:231) perhaps since (according to Simon's words, in fact) he knew God (*Hom.* 17.4.3; *ANF* 8:318-319). Furthermore, Jacob did not have four wives, nor were two of them his sisters, since he was the father of the twelve tribes (*Hom.* 2.52.1-3; *ANF* 8:238). Even though these five pillars received special mention by the Homilist, they were not as important to the overall discussion as Adam and Moses since they were not manifestations of the true prophet. However, they are significant in the overall discussion (both within this chapter and in the *Homilies*) about the existence of false passages.

The connection between the seven pillars and the true prophet in the *Homilies* functions to eradicate any of the allegations about the character of the patriarchs present within the Jewish scriptures. Gieschen's analysis of the patriarchal personalities expands Schoeps' earlier hypothesis that the ideal figure lists serve a polemical purpose against Marcionite, Gnostic, and Pauline Christianity since Gieschen claims that his investigation of the ideal figure lists sheds light on the origins of the theological aspects of the Pseudo-Clementines.⁹¹ I find his arguments regarding the appropriation of the ideal figures as well as their connection to the figure of the true prophet and Pseudo-Clementine Christology both convincing and illuminating. The appropriation of the pillar characters contributes to the author's construction of group identity by validating those Jewish traditions within the community which were transmitted by the ideal figures. Furthermore, the claim of inheritance of the patriarchs validates their belief that they have received the true teaching of God as transmitted through the patriarchs.

The important role granted to Adam and Moses functions as a polemic against the theological framework of Pauline theology.⁹² Yet, the polemic may be aimed not so much at Pauline theology but rather "Gnostic" groups who rely upon and extrapolate from Paul's interpretation of the function of the Mosaic law. In addition, Simon's attack on the patriarchs

⁹¹ Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte*, 173-188. Gieschen, "The Seven Pillars," 48-49, see especially 48 n.5. Yet both authors are convinced that the Ebionite community played an important role in the continued development of the ideal list and its inclusion within the Pseudo-Clementines.

⁹² Romans 5 is arguably the best example of Paul's view that Adam's act of disobedience resulted in the emergence of sin and death in the world. The Homilist's view of Adam as one manifestation of the true prophet of God jars with such a theological position since Paul depicts Adam's ignorance as a cause for the fall from Eden.

could easily represent the view of the Marcionites. According to Marcion, the patriarchs were the only members of the underworld unwilling to hear Christ's teachings. According to Marcion, the patriarchs mistakenly placed their loyalty with the demiurge, refusing to hear the words of Christ.⁹³ This Marcionite teaching explains the apparent apologetic nature of the *Homilies'* narrative regarding the patriarchs. If true, then this argument in defense of the "pillars" is further reason to suspect the *Homilies* as competing with the Marcionites over the proper interpretation of scripture and the construction of identity. By applying the theory of the false passages to the negative statements of the patriarchs within the Pentateuch, the Homilist was able not only to reestablish the credibility of the patriarchs but also elevate their standing in the community by associating the seven pillars with the true prophet.

2.4.3. *Sacrifice and other cultic practices*

The *Homilies* also discusses the parameters of what it considers correct practice. Sacrifices, purity regulations, baptism, and meat that has been offered to idols are all recurring topics throughout the *Homilies*. Avoiding or adhering to the various practices demonstrates one's identity as part of the believing community. While the false passages function to preserve the community's particular interpretation of the Jewish scriptures and how they should be understood in relation to Christ and the Christian writings, the cultic practices function in a similar way to maintain the borders of the religious life of the community.

Sacrifice is an important example of an invalid practice derived from the false passages in the *Homilies*. Through the narrative, the Homilist explains that the Jewish scriptures indicate the deception of the sacrificial cult.⁹⁴ In his debate with Simon, Peter explains that God is not pleased with sacrifices since God never required humans to enact such a practice (*Hom.* 3.45.1-2; *ANF* 8:247). Peter cites Numbers 11.32-34 where God suddenly kills those Israelites with Moses who eat the flesh of animals. Sacrifice is associated with other false elements of the Jewish scriptures such as female prophecy and the monarchy (discussed below) (*Hom.* 3.52.1; *ANF*

⁹³ Harnack, *Marcion*, 85-86.

⁹⁴ Strecker points out that the rejection of the temple and the sacrificial cult was common among Jewish and Jewish Christian groups after the first century (*Judenchristentum*, 179). Bigg also cites this attitude within writings like the *Epistle of Barnabas*, the *Epistle of Diognetus*, the *Praedicatio Petri*, and the *Constitutions of the Apostles* ("The Clementine Homilies," 181).

8:248). Also, Peter explains to Simon that some of the ancient Israelites who mistakenly adhered to the false passages about God's interest in murder upheld the practice of sacrifice for atonement; they believed they acted out of piety (*Hom.* 18.19.1-3; *ANF* 8:329).

At the same time, the Homilist points out passages from the Christian writings that also debunk the sacrificial cult. There are no examples of Jesus offering sacrifice in the Christian writings. Jesus' lack of participation in the temple cult illustrates that there is no reason to consider sacrifice as an authentic activity. This conclusion is further supported in the Homilist's general interpretation of Matthew 5:17 ("Do not think that I have come not to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.") to denote that if Christ did not participate in a practice, it must be considered inauthentic. In a later chapter, the Homilist cites the Gospel of Matthew's use of Hosea's statement that God "desires mercy, not sacrifices" (Matt 9:13, 12:7; Hosea 6:6; *Hom.* 3.56.4; *ANF* 8:248; see also *Hom.* 3.26.3; *ANF* 8:243). These citations come as little surprise given the Pseudo-Clementines' dependence on the first gospel. In addition, the sacrificial quality of Jesus' death, which is so critical to Pauline theology, is absent from the Pseudo-Clementine theology.⁹⁵ Salvation is brought to humanity through baptism and the teachings of the true prophet instead of his sacrifice.

It is possible that the Homilist understood sacrifices as an abomination since they were connected with the temple. The construction of a temple was never part of God's commands to Moses and was even rejected when David considered the endeavor. Considering the consistent rejection of temple idolatry of the Gentiles, not to mention the historical destruction of the temple in the first century, the Homilist considers the combination of God never calling for a temple and its "uprooting" as clear indications that God was not satisfied with the temple and its practices.⁹⁶ However, Strecker argues that the rejection of the temple as well as the sacrificial cult in the *KP* was due to the rejection of the impurity of blood (e.g. *Hom.* 3.24.1; *ANF* 8:242-243).⁹⁷ F.S. Jones suggests that the vegetarianism evidenced in the Pseudo-Clementines (*Hom.*

⁹⁵ Schoeps argues that it is the rejection of Jesus as the atoning sacrifice that generated the anti-Pauline attitude within the Pseudo-Clementines (*Jewish Christianity*, 83; *Theologie und Geschichte*, 157-158).

⁹⁶ Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity*, 86-87.

⁹⁷ Strecker, *Judenchristentum*, 182. He also notes that this motif is also found throughout the *Didascalia*.

12.6.4; *ANF* 8:293; *Rec.* 7.6.4; *ANF* 8:158) could also have resulted from the rejection of sacrifices.⁹⁸

Even though sacrifice was targeted for annulment, there were other purity laws from the Jewish scriptures which were upheld within the Pseudo-Clementine community. For instance, following regulations regarding the separation of a husband and wife during her menstruation as outlined in the Jewish law is one such requirement. The Homilist refers to Matthew 23:25-28⁹⁹ when he recalls how Jesus chastised the scribes and Pharisees for only cleansing themselves outwardly though not inwardly (*Hom.* 11.28.1–11.29.4; *ANF* 8:290). The *Homilies* requires that those in the community maintain purity from the pollution of the prophetess (e.g. *Hom.* 3.24.1-2; *ANF* 8:242-243). Women are also commanded to wash after intercourse in order to maintain purity standards according to the law of purification (*Hom.* 7.8.2; *ANF* 8:269). In such instances, husbands must respect the regulation of separation (*Hom.* 11.28.1; *ANF* 8:290).¹⁰⁰

Another tradition emphasized by the author is baptism. Most of the twenty books of the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* conclude with Peter baptizing new initiates after the day's debates and discussions (e.g. *Hom.* 3.73.1-3; *ANF* 8:251). Baptism is a central religious ritual in the Pseudo-Clementine community; it serves as a central marker of initiation into the community. Strecker claims that “[b]aptism serves as the sole rite of initiation, not circumcision.”¹⁰¹ It functions to remove sin (*Hom.* 7.8.1; *ANF* 8:269).

⁹⁸ Jones, “Jewish Christianity of the *Pseudo-Clementines*,” 322. Jones also cites direct evidence for this anti-sacrificial attitude from Epiphanius (*Pan.* 30.16.7; 30.15.3; 19.3.6).

⁹⁹ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup, so that the outside also may become clean. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which on the outside look beautiful, but inside they are full of the bones of the dead and of all kinds of filth. So you also on the outside look righteous to others, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”

¹⁰⁰ The Homilist's notions on the issue of purity are an interesting contradiction to those of the Didascalist. Recall that the Didascalia argues against women separating themselves from their husbands, prayer, or the sacraments during times of supposed impurity since, as the author claims, the women are not really impure; nor do they need to be reaccepted into the community (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:238-239). How this intersection of the two texts relates to the issue of literary dependency or social competition will be addressed in the concluding chapter.

¹⁰¹ Strecker, “On the Problem of Jewish Christianity,” 266 [268].

Καὶ μήτοι νομίσεις ὅτι, ἔαν πάντων τῶν ποτε γενομένων εὐσεβῶν εὐσεβέστερος γένῃς, ἀβάπτιστος δὲ ἦς, ἐλπίδος τυχεῖν δυνήσει ποτέ. ταύτη γὰρ μᾶλλον πλείονα ὑφέξεις κόλασιν, ὅτι καλὰ ἔργα οὐκ ἐποίησας καλῶς. καλὴ γὰρ εὐποιία, ὁπόταν ὡς θεὸς ἐκέλευ σενγίνηται. σὺ δὲ εἰ οὐ θέλεις ὡς ἐκείνῳ ἔδοξεν βαπτισθῆναι, τῷ σω θελήματι ὑπηρετῶν ἐχθραίνεις τῇ ἐκείνου βουλῇ. (*Hom.* 11.25.2-3; *ANF* 8:289)¹⁰²

According to a rephrasing of John 3:5, unless someone is baptized by living water he cannot enter the Kingdom of God (*Hom.* 11.26.2; *ANF* 8:290). It also functions to protect members of the community from demonic influences (*Hom.* 19.23.2; *ANF* 8:338). Baptism is arguably the most important ritual of religious life.

Besides these ceremonial regulations, community members must also avoid food that has been offered to idols (*Hom.* 7.8.1; *ANF* 8:269). Anyone who participates in such a practice will incur condemnation and become subject to the power of the demons (*Hom.* 8.19.1–20.4; *ANF* 8:274). This regulation would have targeted the Gentile members in particular (*Hom.* 2.33.4; *ANF* 8:235). Yet, Peter (i.e. the Homilist) claims that even “some of our nation” have engaged in these demonic practices (*Hom.* 8.22.2; *ANF* 8:274). Peter is concerned that Simon’s false suggestion that there are other gods will confuse the Gentiles and cause them to return to idolatry, their default mode of worship (*Hom.* 3.3.3–4.4; *ANF* 8:239).

2.4.4. *Prophecy and prophets*

The doctrine of the syzygies (discussed above) is the basis for the Homilist’s attack on the validity of the prophetic writings of the Jewish scriptures. Interpreters of the Jewish scriptures had noticed problematic contradictions among the prophets regarding, for instance, the nature of God.¹⁰³ Adam and Eve, the first human pair, are responsible for true and false prophecy, respectively (*Hom.* 3.22.1-3; *ANF* 8:242);¹⁰⁴ they represent the superior male prophecy and the inferior female type (*Hom.* 3.27.1-3; *ANF* 8:243). Peter argues that Adam, a

¹⁰² “And do not think, though you were more pious than all the pious that ever were, but if you be unbaptized, that you shall ever obtain hope...For well-doing is excellent when it is done as God has commanded. But if you will not be baptized according to His pleasure, you serve your own will and oppose His counsel.”

¹⁰³ See Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte*, 170-171 for a helpful list of these biblical passages from the prophetic writings, such as Gen 3:22, 6:6, Exod 24:10, and Jeremiah 18:10.

¹⁰⁴ Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity*, 90.

manifestation of the true prophet (*Hom.* 3.20.2; 21.1; *ANF* 8:242), possessed the gift of foreknowledge (*Hom.* 3.17.1-6; 3.42.1-7; *ANF* 8:241, 246). Since Adam was not born of woman but created by God, he received the deity's gift of foreknowledge (*Hom.* 3.43.1-6; *ANF* 8:246). He knew the names of the animals as well as what names would be appropriate for his sons, Cain ("envy") and Abel ("grief") given the outcome of their future relationship (*Hom.* 3.25.1-26.6; *ANF* 8:243). Adam's ability demonstrates that true prophecy is constant (*Hom.* 2.10.1; 3.12.3-14.2; *ANF* 8:230, 240-241) unlike the temporary nature of false prophecy (*Hom.* 2.15.1-5; *ANF* 8:231). Inauthentic prophecy is attributed to Eve who transmitted it to humanity, those born of women (*Hom.* 3.22.1-24.4; *ANF* 8:232-233). Subsequently, the prophetess is responsible for the institution of sacrifice as well as the temporary establishment of the monarchy.

Peter explains to Simon that the majority of biblical prophets were part of the lineage of female prophecy. Deceived by the falsehoods of this inferior knowledge (*Hom.* 3.24.1-2; *ANF* 8:242-243) they made accusatory statements against God (*Hom.* 3.36.1-2; *ANF* 8:245). This is the reason why Simon is able to cite prophetic texts which indicate multiple gods or God's imperfection while, at the same time, Peter is able to cite passages describing God's unity and perfection. As demonstrated above, one of the hermeneutical keys regarding the false passages is Matthew 5:17. However, the *Homilies* provides an altered version of the Matthean statement. The Homilist's version reads, "I have not come to destroy the law" (*Hom.* 3.51.2; *ANF* 8:248). The exclusion of the phrase "or the prophets" from the Matthean original is curiously noticeable. The Homilist appears to imply that Jesus has come to destroy the prophets along with the false portions of the law.

The polemic against prophecy in the Pseudo-Clementines may have originated due to contact with "Gnostic" groups of the time. The presentation of the prophetess and the true prophet, one example of the syzygies, replaces the genealogical accounts of Gnostic groups. As discussed above, Strecker argues that the false passages arose due to encounters with Gnostics in general. However, he does not notice how the explanation of prophecy and false passages in the *Homilies* parallels the mythological accounts that make up the foundation of many Gnostic groups. A frequent characteristic of Gnostic texts is a reinterpretation, or adaptation, of the biblical stories of creation. Gnostic writings such as the *Apocryphon of John* explain that Sophia, the personification of wisdom, leaves the pleroma and has some involvement with the creation of an imperfect earthly realm. The new realm is ruled by the demiurge and his archons rather than

the deity of the Hebrew Bible. It is difficult to envision an author or community that accepts conflicting accounts of the deity of the Hebrew Bible as correct; therefore, the community accepts one version as authentic while the other interpretation considered false.

Furthermore, in the *Homilies* there are two types of explanations for the spurious aspects of the Jewish scriptures. The first is a literary-critical approach whereby the faithful member of the community is initiated into the proper means of discerning the true from the false passages by noting the contradictory portions of scripture. The second explanation for falsehoods appears in a more mythological account. Types of prophecy are divided into pairs, or syzygies, of male and female (*Hom.* 3.23.1-4; *ANF* 8:242). The female prophetess, an unnamed and somewhat cosmic figure, is responsible for the malignancies of society, such as sacrifices, ritual pollution, the Jewish monarchy, deceit, blindness, and even death (*Hom.* 3.24.1-4; *ANF* 8:243). Only the true prophet – who always manifests as a man, whether Adam, Moses, or Jesus – can rid the world of the falsehoods established by the prophetess (*Hom.* 3.27.1–28.3; *ANF* 8:243).

I suggest that the model of the prophetess and the true prophet in the *Homilies* is a mythological mirror of the so-called Gnostic mythologies.¹⁰⁵ It functions to eclipse the existing gnostic cosmological accounts which have likely pervaded the community. In constructing religious identity, the Homilist is engaged in a type of competition over the validity of certain mythological devices, such as genealogies that attempt to trace the various powers at work in the cosmos or, more important to this discussion, the explanations of how certain celestial beings or forces reveal knowledge and the means of discernment to humans. Whereas the more rational explanation of the false passages counters the logical and literal claims of groups like the Marcionites, the mythological format of the two types of prophecy challenges the larger corpus of gnostic cosmologies. The anonymous prophetess figure functions as a larger paradigm for the incorrect prophecies which have occurred throughout history. Similarly, the true prophet represents past figures that are celebrated by the *Homilies'* community. In this way, the Homilist is able to rely on paradigmatic figures of Jewish history in order to counter the abstract genealogical and mythological accounts of competing groups in the region.

¹⁰⁵ The Gnostic dualism is also recognized by Rehm's note to *Hom.* 3.23.1-2.

2.4.5. *The Jewish monarchy*

The rejection of the Jewish monarchy in the *Homilies* relates to the negative perception of sacrifice, the temple, and perhaps even prophecy. As stated above, a practice or pericope is grouped among the false passages if it contradicts either the rational, positive depictions of God or the words and actions of the true prophet as retold in the gospels. The monarchy is considered inauthentic since it fails both of these litmus tests.

The Jewish monarchy has passed away, along with sacrifices and false prophecies (*Hom.* 3.53.2; *ANF* 8:248). According to the false passages hermeneutic of the *Homilies* this is reason enough to consider the monarchy as contrary to God's will. It is even associated with one of the central hermeneutical devices of the Homilist, Matt 15:13: "every plant which the heavenly father has not planted shall be rooted up" (*Hom.* 3.52.1-2; *ANF* 8:248). The monarchy, claims the Homilist, is associated with the false prophetess who "stirs up wars, shedding much blood" and "brings forth temporary kings" (*Hom.* 3.24.1-2; *ANF* 8:242-243).¹⁰⁶ At the same time, the monarchy is questioned within the Jewish scriptures. Hosea 8:4 relates that the monarchy is against the will of God.

The written version of the Mosaic law also calls the monarchy into question. According to the Homilist, Moses did not provide a written law. The written version was then found in the temple some five hundred years later (*Hom.* 3.47.1-4; *ANF* 8:247). The Homilist appears to retell the story of Josiah's reform (2 Kings 22ff) which established the Jerusalem temple as the only legitimate temple for Jewish pilgrimage and sacrifice – countering the popular, and difficult to regulate, high places. In effect, the written version of the Mosaic law was falsified in the temple as a result of the monarchy.¹⁰⁷

As an alternative to the Jewish monarchy, the Homilist suggests that there should only be "one universal King" established by God who can bring "unfailing peace" (*Hom.* 3.61.1–62.3; *ANF* 8:249). However, little information is provided concerning the identity of such an individual; he should simply be someone "acquainted with the road that enters into the holy city" (*Hom.* 3.62.4; *ANF* 8:249). Understood allegorically, the Homilist's attack on the Jewish

¹⁰⁶ The depiction of the warring kings conflicts with the peaceful judges in *Rec.* 1.38.3.

¹⁰⁷ Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity*, 83-84.

monarchy might signal an opposition to earthly competitors of the singular universal God who reigns over all.

3. The *Homilies*, False Passages, and the Construction of Religious Identity

The false passages theory of the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* is a complex and fascinating subject. Although there are parallels to the texts investigated earlier in this dissertation, the *Homilies* offers a unique configuration of the various elements of what is considered false scripture as well as how and why these passages came to appear alongside God's true words. This configuration can be mined further in order to suggest how the Homilist represents the identity of his community. What remains in this chapter is to discuss how the rhetorical argument of the *Homilies* functioned to stabilize a sense of social identity within a late third- or early fourth-century Syrian community.

3.1. The *Homilies* and Social Identity

In my view, the *Homilies* operates as an educational device within the community. The narrative aspect of the story, that is, Clement's adventures with Peter and his eventual reunion with his family, provides a vehicle for the instructional material regarding the proper interpretation of scripture. Correct interpretation is dependent upon the ability to discern the authentic portions from the spurious ones. The Homilist uses the debates between Peter and Simon to inform members of the audience about how to understand why certain traditions are upheld in the community while others are rejected. A review of the above analysis of the false passages argument will confirm this conclusion.

The importance of the false passages theory of the *Homilies* is introduced early in the text in order to prepare the audience for the debates. The Homilist is quick to point out the serious consequences of maintaining either theological premises or ritual practices anchored in false passages. The doctrine of false passages functions as a litmus test since those who wish to be considered part of the faithful community are to reject such problematic passages. Anyone who maintains a theology based in the false passages is considered condemned as an enemy of God.

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, κὰν ἀληθῆ τυγχάνῃς, πολλῶ Κρίναντες ἀσφαλέστερον περὶ

εὐφήμου πίστεως κινδυνεύειν ἢ ἐπὶ βλασφήμοις λόγοις δυσσυνειδήτως βιοῦν. (*Hom.* 2.38.2)¹⁰⁸

The figure of Simon is the model of an impious person who adheres to the falsehoods of scripture.¹⁰⁹ Simon is often portrayed as interested in leading people astray (*Hom.* 3.2.3; *ANF* 8:239, etc.). As discussed above, the purpose of the false passages is to weed out the unfaithful whose belief in God would be either swayed or shattered upon learning of the apparent contradictions in the scriptures. The character of Simon fulfills this role in the narrative. Simon demonstrates that he is on the side of the wicked one by executing the evil one's plan to test humanity. Those who uphold Simon's ideas and false teachings have failed Satan's test; they are considered outsiders by the believing community.¹¹⁰ Such individuals are not part of the community and are not privy to the esoteric knowledge of the scriptures that has been transmitted by Christ to Peter and Clement. The false passages hermeneutic of the *Homilies* presented believers with a means to demonstrate their faith and loyalty to the community by following the proper instruction transmitted from Jesus to Peter and through generations of communal leaders. To be free from the influence of the devil entailed rejecting any so-called false beliefs anchored in the scriptures.¹¹¹ The rhetorical effect of this aspect of the narrative is

¹⁰⁸ “And this took place in reason and judgment that those who dare to hear the things written against God might be convicted and those with loving obedience to God might only disbelieve those things spoken against him, but should not even endure to hear them at all, even if they should happen to be true, considering it safer to incur danger regarding religious faith than to live with an evil conscience due to blasphemous words.”

¹⁰⁹ Studies on the figure of Simon Magus as he connects to early Christianity and the Pseudo-Clementines can be found in Wayne A. Meeks “Simon Magus in Recent Research,” *Religious Studies Review* vol. 3 n.3 (1977): 137-141; R. McL. Wilson “Simon, Dositheus and the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Zeitschrift für Religions und Geistesgeschichte* vol. 9 (Leiden: Brill, 1957) 21-30; Alberto Ferreiro “Simon Magus: The Patristic – Medieval Traditions and Historiography,” *Apocrypha* 7 (1996): 147-165; A. Salles “Simon le Magicien ou Marcion?” *Vigiliae Christianae* 12 (1958): 197-224.

¹¹⁰ Although Niceta and Aquila had been educated about the “false” theology by Simon, they have since come to reject these interpretations. Therefore, they can be considered part of the believing community.

¹¹¹ Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity*, 81.

powerful. If there were members of the Clementine community who reflected on the false passages they, too, would be considered enemies of God.

The false passages argument serves a powerful role in maintaining theological and social boundaries within the community. The positive attitude toward the challenge of the false passages faced by the community is encapsulated in *Hom.* 3.4.4 (*ANF* 8:239) μή οὖν ὑμῶν τις τὸν Σίμωνα παντελῶς μεμφέσθω ἢ καὶ ἄλλον τινά· οὐδὲν γὰρ ἀδίκως γίνεται, ὅπου καὶ τὰ τῶν γραφῶν ψευδῆ εὐλόγως πρὸς δοκιμὴν ἔχοντα τυγχάνει.¹¹² Group membership is based on whether or not someone learns how to discern properly the true passages from the false ones. If they are able to accomplish this goal, they are considered part of the believing community and have proven themselves as the true followers of Christ. If they fail the test that the scriptures supply, they are condemned and considered enemies of God. The importance of the false passages argument emerges in the inquiry over what constitutes the authentic law of God. Identifying God's will is crucial to the life of a religious community. In dictating which portions of the scriptures are true and which are false, the Homilist assumes the ability to decide the direction of scriptural interpretation and, thus, religious life of the community.

Even though the written law has become corrupted with false additions, there are still genuine aspects contained within the writings. As a catechetical text, the *Homilies* sporadically provides insight to the reader regarding which elements of religious life deemed authentic.

ἓνα οὖν θεὸν σέβειν ἐλόμενοι καὶ τραπεζῆς δαιμόνων ἀποσχόμενοι καὶ σωφροσύνην μετὰ φιλανθρωπίας καὶ δικαιοσύνης ἀναδεξάμενοι καὶ τρισμακαρί ἐπονομασί εἰς ἀφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν βαπτισάμενοι τῷ ὅσον δύνασθε ἐπὶ τὸ τέλειον τῆς ἀγνείας ἑαυτοὺς ἐπιδιδόναι δύνασθε κολάσεως αἰδίου ῥυσθέντες αἰωνίων ἀγαθῶν κληρονόμοι καταστήναι. (*Hom.* 9.23.2; *ANF* 8:279)¹¹³

Elsewhere we find the following statement.

¹¹² “Let not any one of you, therefore, altogether complain of Simon, or of any one else; for nothing happens unjustly, since even the falsehoods of Scripture are with good reason presented for a test.”

¹¹³ “Choosing, therefore, to worship one God, and refraining from the table of demons, and undertaking chastity with philanthropy and righteousness, and being baptized with the thrice-blessed invocation for the remission of sins, and devoting yourselves as much as you can to the perfection of purity, you can escape everlasting punishment and be constituted heirs of eternal blessings.”

ἔστιν δὲ τὰ ἀρέσκοντα τῷ Θεῷ τὸ αὐτῷ προσεύχεσθαι, αὐτὸν αἰτεῖν ὡς πάντα νόμῳ κριτικῶ διδόντα, τραπεζῆς δαιμόνων ἀπέχεσθαι, νεκρᾶς μὴ γεύεσθαι σαρκός, μὴ ψαύειν αἵματος, ἐκ παντὸς ἀπολούεσθαι λύματος. (*Hom. 7.4.2; ANF 8:268*)¹¹⁴

This passage continues by mentioning a number of the commandments from the Decalogue to uphold, such as the ban on murder, adultery, and theft (*Hom. 7.4.4; ANF 8:268*). Participating in these religious and social expectations makes the individual one of “God’s beloved” (θέω προσφιλεῖς) (*Hom. 7.4.5; ANF 8:268*).

These passages illustrate that monotheism, some type of purity regulations as envisioned by the author, and baptism are practices especially prized by the Homilist. It is likely that they were enforced within the regular practices of the community. These examples illustrate how identity is constructed in the way the *Homilies* provides positive examples of authentic traditions to counterbalance the numerous discussions of false aspects of religious life.

3.2. The *Homilies* and the Rehabilitation of the Gentiles

Besides providing a list of “authorized” practices, the Homilist also creates a sense of identity by constructing a dichotomy between Jews and Gentiles. One aspect of identity involves a lesser opinion of the Gentiles. Throughout the *Homilies* there is a polemic against the pagan religions of the Gentiles. The Homilist’s construction of Gentile identity, like so many aspects of his writing, is dependent upon the false passages theory. The work of the wicked one among the Gentiles resulted in the spread of confusion. The *Homilies* explains that practices such as idolatry and consuming food that has been offered to idols are the result of false passages and demonic trickery. On account of false beliefs and practices, the Gentiles have been deceived into disregarding the belief in the one true God as well as his complete monarchy of the universe (*Hom. 3.3.1-2; ANF 8:239*).

The Homilist points out that the greatest sin is polytheism, breaking the first commandment and forsaking God (*Hom. 9.1.2; ANF 8:275*). The religions of the Gentiles are based on demonic fabrications designed to trick them into worshipping invented mythical gods (*Hom. 4.12.1-2; Rec. 4.13.1-4; ANF 8:253-254, 137*). The demons work with the devil to test the

¹¹⁴ “And the things which are pleasing to God are to pray to him, to ask from him, acknowledging that he is the giver of all things under discriminating laws, to abstain from eating with demons, not to taste dead flesh, not to touch human blood, to be washed from all pollution.”

piety of all humans, Jew and Greek. Since the majority of Gentiles are unaware of their predicament, according to the Homilist, their religious life breeds ignorance and wickedness (*Hom.* 4.15.2–4.20.3; *ANF* 8:254-255). Part of Jesus’ mission while on earth is to rehabilitate the Gentiles from the idolatrous and wicked ways and place them on the path of the pious and faithful members of the community.

The frequent attacks on pagan idolatry (e.g. *Hom.* 11.21.4, 11.31.1, etc. ; *ANF* 8:289, 291) could illustrate that members of the Homilist’s community were either interested or already involved in pagan religious practices. Strecker argues that it is possible that the author targeted Gentiles, whether or not they had been initiated into the community.¹¹⁵ I submit that the Homilist’s construction of a Jew/Gentile dichotomy functions rhetorically to mark insiders and outsiders. When the above passages are analyzed with this understanding in mind, the polemics against Gentile religious practices, which may have been an issue in the author’s own reality, also functions to construct a boundary line that is not to be crossed by members of the author’s community.

As discussed above, Simon is the catalyst for the spread of the detrimental ideas and practices. Like the demons, Simon is a minion of the wicked one. ὁ Σίμων ταῖς ψευδέσιν τῶν γραφῶν περικοπαῖς ὠπλισμένος πολεμεῖν ἡμῖν προσέρχεται (*Hom.* 3.3.2; *ANF* 8:239).¹¹⁶ He is determined to prove that the god of the Jewish scriptures is only one among many in the pagan pantheon. He even intends to use the Jewish scriptures to accomplish his goal (*Hom.* 3.3.3; *ANF* 8:239).

The passages Simon has in mind are discounted by Peter as false passages. Peter encourages the faithful to avoid Simon’s temptations, mirroring the Homilist’s warning to members of his community. He states that Simon’s arguments will not influence

κατὰ τοῦ ὄντως θεοῦ οὐ πεφόβηται. Καὶ ἡμῖν μὲν τοῖς ἐκ προγόνων παρεληφόσιν τὸν τὰ πάντα κτίσαντα σέβειν θεόν, ἐτι δὲ καὶ τῶν ἀπατᾶν δυναμένων βιβλῶν τὸ μυστήριον...τοῖς δὲ ἀπὸ ἔθνῶν, τὴν πολυθεον ὑπόληψιν σύντροφον ἔχουσιν καὶ τῶν γραφῶν τὰ ψευδῆ οὐκ εἰδόσιν, πολὺ δυνήσεται. (*Hom.* 3.4.1-2; *ANF* 8:239)¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Strecker, “On the Problem of Jewish Christianity,” 262 [264].

¹¹⁶ “Simon comes to do battle with us, armed with the false chapters of the scriptures.”

¹¹⁷ “us, indeed, who have had handed down from our forefathers the worship of the God who made all things, and also the mystery of the books which are able to deceive...but with those

This passage indicates that the Gentiles are something other than the “us” which likely represents the author’s community. Even so, there are those Gentiles who will refuse to believe any falsehoods against God, even if they are few in number (*Hom.* 3.4.3; *ANF* 8:239). For this reason, Christ has extended mercy to the Gentiles even in place of his own people, the Jews (*Hom.* 3.19.1-3; *ANF* 8:242). The Homilist claims that just as the Jewish nation was saved by God from the oppression of the Egyptians, so will the Gentiles be ransomed from the false worship of idols (*Hom.* 2.33.4; *ANF* 8:235). Thus, there remains a level of ambiguity as to the place of Gentiles within the community of the Homilist. Clearly, there are those Gentiles who have rejected the authentic words of God and are considered condemned. Yet, at the same time, there are those who have rejected the false passages and apparently abide by the standards of the community.

The false passages rhetoric functions to impair the efficacy of pagan practices, especially idolatry and consuming idolatrous food, and further dictate the religious practices that are so critical in defining group identity. The audience is educated both on which practices are beneficial and which are harmful. Those who engage in the dangerous practices outlined in any of the false passages have failed the test instituted by the devil. Rhetorically, the false passages theory fabricates imagined insider-outsider categories of pious believers versus those manipulated by demonic influences.

3.3. The *Homilies* and Continuity with Judaism

The generally negative attitude toward the Gentiles and their supposed failed religious practices is contrasted with the positive view of the Jews and their traditions. The dichotomous relationship between Jew and Greek is encapsulated in the Homilist’s view that anyone who τὸν νόμον πράξῃς, Ἰουδαίος ἔστιν, μὴ πράξῃς δὲ Ἕλληγν (*Hom.* 11.16.3; *ANF* 8:288).¹¹⁸ The Homilist presents a respectful tone towards Jews and Judaism. Peter and Clement defend the reputation of the doctrines of the Jews as being pious and derived from a single good God (*Hom.* 4.13.1-3; *ANF* 8:254). In addition, the Homilist argues that the Jewish law has been established

from among the Gentiles who have the polytheistic preference bred in them, and who do not know the falsehoods of the scriptures, he will prevail much.”

¹¹⁸ “practices the law, he is a Jew; but he who does not practice it is a Greek.”

by God (*Hom.* 4.22.1-2; *ANF* 8:255).¹¹⁹ The *Homilies*, then, encourages a link to Judaism and Jewish praxis.

The positive attitude towards Judaism is demonstrated by examples such as the Homilist's exhortation to preserve and utilize (the authentic portions of) the scriptures and the admiration of the Jewish patriarchs. But perhaps the strongest evidence for the notion that the Homilist was interested in maintaining ties with Judaism is the connection between Moses and Jesus. As explained in the *Homilies*, Jesus was concealed from the Hebrews. In his place, the Jews have Moses as their teacher, yet Moses was hidden from the followers of Jesus.

τούτου γὰρ ἔνεκεν ἀπὸ μὲν Ἑβραίων τὸν Μωυσῆν διδάσκαλον εἰληφότων καλύπτεται ὁ Ἰησοῦς, ἀπὸ δὲ τῶν Ἰησοῦ πεπιστευκότων ὁ Μωυσῆς ἀποκρύπτεται· μιᾶς γὰρ δι' ἀμφοτέρων διδασκαλίας οὐσης τὸν τούτων τινὶ πεπιστευκότα ὁ θεὸς ἀποδέχεται. ἀλλὰ τὸ πιστεύειν διδασκάλ' ἕνεκα τοῦ ποιεῖν τὰ ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ λεγόμενα γίνεται. ὅτι δὲ τοῦθ' οὕτως ἔχει, αὐτὸς ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν λέγει· Ἐξομολογούμαι σοι, πάτερ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ τῆς γῆς, ὅτι ἔκρυψας ταῦτα ἀπὸ σοφῶν πρεσβυτέρων καὶ ἀπεκάλυψας αὐτὰ νηπίοις θηλάζουσιν. Οὕτως αὐτὸς ὁ θεὸς τοῖς μὲν ἐκρυψεν διδάσκαλον ὡς προεγνωκόσιν ἃ δεῖ πράττειν, τοῖς δὲ ἀπεκάλυψεν ὡς ἄγνοοῦσιν ἃ χρὴ ποιεῖν. (*Hom.* 8.6.1-5; *ANF* 8:271)¹²⁰

Salvation, however, is open to members of either camp (*Hom.* 8.6.1; *ANF* 8:271). Redemption exists because each figure is a separate manifestation of the true prophet; the same material is taught by each leader (*Hom.* 9.19.3; *ANF* 8:279). Neither side is condemned for not knowing the other (*Hom.* 8.7.1-4; *ANF* 8:271) since, according to his foreknowledge, God reveals each teacher to those who will accept him (*Hom.* 8.6.5; *ANF* 8:271). The author states that those who believe the words spoken by Moses are saved only if they follow his teachings. The same is true for the followers of Jesus (*Hom.* 8.5.1-4; *ANF* 8:271). Neither Moses nor Jesus dispenses his

¹¹⁹ A statement that agrees with *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*, which views the deity of the Jewish scriptures as the demiurge who has established one portion of the Mosaic law (see chapter two) and even the *Didascalia Apostolorum* which attributes even the secondary law to the biblical deity as well (see chapter three).

¹²⁰ “For on this account, Jesus is concealed from the Jews who have taken Moses as their teacher and Moses is hidden from those who have followed Jesus. Since there is one teaching from both, God accepts him who has believed either of these. But believing a teacher is for the sake of doing the things spoken by God. And that this is so our Lord himself says, ‘I thank you, Father of heaven and earth, because you have concealed these things from the wise and elder and have revealed them to suckling babes.’ Thus God himself has concealed a teacher from some, having foreknowledge of what they should do, and has revealed him to others who are ignorant of what they should do.”

teachings independently; both owe this information to God. Believing in a teacher means little since their knowledge stems from God (*Hom.* 8.5.4; 8.6.5; *ANF* 8:271). The Homilist points out a few supporting examples. First, Moses stated, “Behold, I have set before your face the way of life and the way of death” (Deut 30:15) while Jesus stated, “Enter through the strait and narrow way, through which you shall enter into life” (Matt 7:13, 14). Also, when Jesus was asked what was necessary to earn eternal life he indicated the commandments of the Jewish law (Matt 19:16ff; Luke 18.18ff).

The Homilist’s interest in equating the teaching of Moses and Jesus may be motivated by a few factors. First, this explanation may be an attempt to explain why not all of the followers of Moses have accepted the teaching of Christ, and vice-versa. The solution is simple: each figure’s teachings have been hidden from the other’s followers. For this reason, the Homilist suggests that constituents of both parties should not be in opposition to each other. Another explanation for equating Moses and Jesus is that by positioning the teachings of the lawgivers of the Jewish and Christian traditions on par with each other, the *Homilies* embraces the Jewish roots of the community. This scenario would further support the notion that the Homilist’s community was made up of those who followed Moses/Judaism as well as Jesus/Christianity. Apparently, constituents of either tradition are accepted within the larger Pseudo-Clementine community – so long as they properly discern the true and false elements of the scriptures.

It can be argued that the Homilist envisions his community as Jews in the sense that the original salvation provided by God occurs only through the teaching of Moses. At the same time, however, the Homilist may be described as Christian given the prominent role of Christ to offer salvation by discerning the true passages from the false ones. Although the above passage from *Homilies* book eight implies the teachings of Moses and Jesus as mutual yet independent paths of salvation, the larger rhetoric of the false passages says otherwise. Although both Moses and Jesus teach God’s law, it is Jesus who is able to discern that unadulterated teaching. It appears that despite Moses’ elevated position in the community, Christ is somehow superior. It is true that Moses and Christ derive their teachings from the same source. Yet, the Homilist does not elaborate on Moses’ life and ministry as a litmus test for the false passages as he does for Christ.

Despite the above analysis regarding the positive view of the Jews, the Homilist does criticize some from among the Jewish people. Consistent with his preference for the Gospel of Matthew, the Homilist takes aim at the Pharisees and the scribes. Even so, the Homilist softens

Matthew’s portrayal of the Pharisees by refusing to condemn them as a group. The relationship with the Jews evident in the *Homilies* references certain statements of Jesus’ concerning the authority of the scribes and Pharisees.¹²¹ As seen above, the authority of Moses, which validates the oral Torah and Pharisaic interpretation of the scriptures, is not rejected. The teachings of Moses and Jesus are the same since each figure is a manifestation of the true prophet. Followers of either teacher are not condemned for not being familiar with the other (*Hom.* 8.6.1–7.5; *ANF* 8:271). Both groups of followers, then, adhere to God’s regulations. The Homilist references the Gospel of Matthew 23:13 (Luke 11:52) that “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ chair”; their teaching should be obeyed since they possess the key to the kingdom, knowledge. Yet they also guard this knowledge to prevent the people from entering into eternal life (*Hom.* 3.18.2-3; *ANF* 8:241-242). The Homilist, however, does not condemn all of the Pharisees; he claims only some portion of the Pharisees are unworthy hypocrites.¹²² ἐνίων γὰρ καὶ ἑπακούειν ἔλεγεν, ὅτι τὴν Μωυσέως ἐπιστεύθησαν καθέδραν. πλὴν πρὸς τοὺς ὑποκριτὰς ἔλεγεν· Οὐαὶ ὑμῖν, γραμματεῖς καὶ Φαρισαῖοι ὑποκριταὶ (*Hom.* 11.28.4–29.2; *ANF* 8:290).¹²³ On the other hand, the teaching of Christ is greater than that of the Pharisees since Christ, the true prophet, is able to provide “the things which from the beginning were delivered in secret to the worthy”¹²⁴ to the Gentiles (*Hom.* 3.19.1; *ANF* 8:242). The above analysis has demonstrated that the theory of the false passages is a likely candidate for this esoteric knowledge.

In a sense, the interpretation of the Jewish scriptures taught by Jesus is a type of oral Torah that trumps the oral tradition of the Pharisees who possess the knowledge but keep it from the people. By claiming that Jesus’ knowledge has been withheld from the Jews (whom he “neglected” in place of the Gentiles), the Homilist presents a rhetoric designed to attract Jews away from other authoritative teachings to the supposed authentic teaching of God as delivered by Christ and transmitted by Peter to Clement. The scriptures used in the teachings of the

¹²¹ A central theme within the Gospel of Matthew, a text frequently utilized by the Pseudo-Clementines.

¹²² A point specified by Jones, “Jewish Christianity of the *Pseudo-Clementines*,” 324-25.

¹²³ “For to some [Jesus] said that obedience was to be rendered, because they were entrusted with the chair of Moses. However, to the hypocrites he said ‘Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites’....”

¹²⁴ τὰ ἀπὸ αἰῶνος ἐν κρυπτῷ ἀξίῳις παραδιδόμενα κηρύσσων.

Pharisees, after all, have been corrupted by the false passages (*Hom.* 2.38.1-2). However, only Christ has transmitted to Peter the means to discern true statements from fictitious ones. Thus, knowledge of the false passages and the means of their discernment provides an advantage to the Clementine community.

Considering that a significant portion of the social power of the Pharisees rested in their maintenance of the oral and written traditions, transmitted by Moses through the elders, is it possible to consider the targets of the false passages argument an attack on the rabbis of the second century and onward? In this scenario, the *Homilies* would represent a type of Christianity that considered itself a viable alternative to the rabbis in regard to Jewish interpretation of the scriptures. During the first few centuries, rabbinic authors reorganized their scriptures. Some accepted both the Decalogue and the other Mosaic laws; others sifted out narrative accounts from the Pentateuch. Still others rejected the Prophets or materials outside the canonical texts.¹²⁵ A. Marmorstein argues that the usage of the term *poshe Israel* (“apostates of Israel”) in the third century targeted, among others, a group of Jews who frequented Synagogues but “loosened the tie of unity which held Jews together all over the world and through the ages.”¹²⁶ The Pseudo-Clementines were written to recruit these Jews or, perhaps, to represent them; thus, Marmorstein understands the Pseudo-Clementine community as Jews who have adopted certain Christian elements into their theology and praxis.¹²⁷

A. Baumgarten rejects Marmorstein’s conclusions regarding the *poshe Israel*. He notes that Marmorstein’s sources do not specifically identify the *poshe Israel* as Christians.¹²⁸ Baumgarten argues that the hermeneutic of explaining the false passages is a derivative of the rabbinic methods inherited, as is claimed, by Moses.¹²⁹ Furthermore, Baumgarten’s idea fits the

¹²⁵ Marmorstein, “Judaism and Christianity in the Middle of the Third Century,” 256.

¹²⁶ Marmorstein, “Judaism and Christianity in the Middle of the Third Century,” 228.

¹²⁷ Marmorstein argues that the Didascalia targets the same Jewish Christian social group. However, the Didascalia is designed to scare Christians into avoiding contact with such individuals (“Judaism and Christianity in the Middle of the Third Century,” 230ff).

¹²⁸ A. Baumgarten, “Literary Evidence for Jewish Christianity in the Galilee,” in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity* (ed. L. Levine; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 48 n.50.

¹²⁹ Baumgarten, “Literary Evidence,” 44-45.

Pseudo-Clementines' positive evaluation of the tradition of the Jews (*Hom.* 4.13-14; 5.28.1-2; 9.16.1; *ANF* 8:254, 260, 278), especially the preservation of those portions of the Jewish scriptures considered authentic. Baumgarten argues that the rabbis would have rejected any group that upheld a negative view of the Jewish scriptures – an attitude that might have been upheld by the *poshe Israel* or those targeted by the *Birkat ha-Minim*.¹³⁰ Understood in this way, the source for the *Homilies*' theory of false passages would be Jews and Jewish Christians who had become disillusioned with the Jewish authorities, those associated with the temple and its cult, as well as the monarchy. More importantly, this group would have disagreed with the means of scriptural interpretation professed by these Jewish institutions.¹³¹

This is not to say that there could not have been a mutual camaraderie between the rabbinic community and that of the Pseudo-Clementines. Yet, an obvious reason for hostility would be the prominent role of Christ, the true prophet, in the hermeneutic of the Clementine writings. Baumgarten suggests that the Pseudo-Clementine authors might have perceived themselves as the true teachers of the (non-spurious) Jewish laws and traditions in place of the Pharisees, now rabbis, who were so frequently attacked in the Gospel of Matthew (see especially chapters 6 and 23), apparently a favored text in the Clementine community.¹³²

3.4. The *Homilies* and the Marcionites

In the preceding pages, I have argued that the *Homilies* was written, in part, to counter the claims of the Marcionites and Christian “Gnosis.” This argument is not novel.¹³³ Scholarship has often connected the theory of the false passages with the biblical criticism of Marcion and his

¹³⁰ A. Baumgarten, “Literary Evidence,” 39 n.3.

¹³¹ This model also fits with Schoeps' observation (*Theologie und Geschichte*, 167, 176-177) that the rejection of the Jewish prophets is attributed to the lack of their prophecies being realized historically. This same line of reasoning could thus be applied to the temple and the monarchy since both were decimated in the events of the first and early second centuries. Recall that Schoeps argues that the Ebionites and the rabbis shared an increasing interest in a rational reformation of the law which may be a response to the criticism of Marcion and his followers (*Theologie und Geschichte*, 177-179; *Jewish Christianity*, 94-95)

¹³² Baumgarten, “Literary Evidence,” 49.

¹³³ Schoeps, “Ebionite Christianity,” 125.

followers.¹³⁴ It appears that the Homilist uses the false passages theory to construct an identity that is something other than the religious ideas and social identity of his Gnostic neighbors.

I agree with Drijvers' suggestion that the doctrine of the true prophet and the theory of the false passages were designed "to refute the prevailing Marcionism in the Syrian area, where the author of G is sought."¹³⁵ Drijvers argues that the theories of the false passages and the true prophet were key components to an anti-Marcionite polemic within the Pseudo-Clementines. He suggests that Marcion's observations of opposites in the Jewish scriptures were accepted and counter-explained with the notion of false passages. However, a proper understanding of the nature of the false passages required the knowledge passed on by the true prophet – a strategy that served to invalidate Marcion's interpretation. The series of topics debated by Simon and Peter represent the various issues likely raised by Marcionite theology in the Syrian community of the *Homilies*. The Homilist writes his text as an educational tool intended to educate his community on how to defend against Marcion's so-called heretical doctrines.¹³⁶

Simon claims that, according to the scriptures, the deity who fashioned the cosmos is not the supreme God. Instead, there is another "unknown" deity – a notion also found in Marcion's theology. Simon also suggests the highest God sent two other gods into this realm: one to make the world and the other to give the law (*Hom.* 3.2.2-3; *ANF* 8:239).¹³⁷ This dualistic feature is common to many Gnostic authors, including Marcion.¹³⁸

The *Homilies* represents its own notion of secret gnosis. The Homilist presents Peter as secretive about the existence of the spurious words of scripture. Peter, it seems, is uncomfortable

¹³⁴ Strecker and Irmscher, "The Pseudo-Clementines," 487.

¹³⁵ Drijvers, "Adam and the True Prophet," 318. He also references Strecker's *Judenchristentum* 259ff. Even though Drijvers' statement refers to the Basic Writer's confrontation with Marcionites in the second-century, I suggest the hostility continues in the Homilist's fourth-century situation as well. Drijvers' observation is as relevant to the Basic Writer as it is to the Homilist.

¹³⁶ Drijvers, "Adam and the True Prophet," 318-320.

¹³⁷ The idea that the Mosaic law was not delivered by God is not common within the *Homilies*. It does, however, parallel the idea that the law was provided by a lesser deity located in *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*.

¹³⁸ Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.*, 1.19; *ANF* 3:284-285.

with how the public will respond to learning about the existence of false passages in the Jewish scriptures.¹³⁹ Simon intends to disclose the existence of false passages within a public venue, presumably to tempt people away from “the love of God” (*Hom.* 2.39.1) – likely what the Homilist considers to be orthodoxy. Peter is cautious about publicly revealing the existence of false passages since it would only confuse “the unlearned multitudes” and thereby fulfill Simon’s plan (*Hom.* 2.39.2; see also 2.40.3). Peter further qualifies this statement by relating that the crowds would do one of two things. They might flee from him and his companions, seemingly due to rejection of whatever else they have to say. Another option is that the crowd, accepting the existence of false passages, would condemn the scriptures as entirely false (*Hom.* 2.39.3). Peter devises a strategy to convince Simon to hold the debate in private so that Peter could adequately explain the false passages (*Hom.* 2.39.4).

Peter’s caution regarding the public knowledge of the vulnerability of the Jewish scriptures likely reflects the motivation for the false passages strategy in the Pseudo-Clementine community. As Schoeps and Strecker point out, there were other religious groups who noticed the contradictory nature of particular sections of the Jewish scriptures. Gnostic authors, especially Marcion, Apelles, and Ptolemy, all noticed these contradictions. The same is true for Philo, Origen, and the rabbinic authors. Schoeps has argued that the Pseudo-Clementine theory of false passages was invented as an attempt to appropriate and control the explanation for these problematic verses.¹⁴⁰ If this is true, then Simon would represent a host of interpreters who concluded that the Jewish scriptures were vulnerable to corruption and lacked validity or perhaps required alternate explanations.

¹³⁹ The Homilist’s secrecy on this matter is odd. The problematic passages he refers to throughout the *Homilies* are commonly discussed verses, as are the debates that have stemmed from the apparent contradictions they imply. It is naïve to think that all of the members of the Clementine community, at least one component of the audience of the *Homilies*, were unaware of such interpretive issues. Perhaps we should conclude that the Homilist has devised this argument as part of his overarching rhetoric designed to downplay the relevance and significance of polemics against the Jewish scriptures and the people who utilize them.

¹⁴⁰ See the discussion above.

Although Simon's arguments are reminiscent of Marcionite theology, they also recall elements of Pauline theology.¹⁴¹ This situation is not surprising given that Marcion highlighted the teaching of Paul as the true message of God delivered to the one true apostle. Thus, the anti-Pauline sentiments in the Pseudo-Clementines may be part of the anti-Marcionite message. Gieschen suggests that "[t]he veneration of the first Adam may have an anti-Pauline reference."¹⁴² He explains that since Paul elevated Christ as the second Adam, in opposition to the failure of the first Adam, the Pseudo-Clementines' "rehabilitation" of Adam would contrast a central emphasis within Paul's teachings. Similarly, the link between Moses and Christ in the Pseudo-Clementines would also qualify as anti-Pauline given Paul's proclivity to disregard certain Mosaic laws.¹⁴³

The hostility toward Paul is likely a result of the contrast between his rejection of the law and Jesus' interest in maintaining the law – even if it needs to be purged of the false passages. In addition, Paul's knowledge of God rested on charismatic experiences that are based on subjective experience. This type of epistemology is challenged within the *Homilies* (17.13-14). Furthermore, Peter explains that God informed Aaron and Miriam that he reveals himself to prophets through dreams; however, he speaks directly to Moses (*Hom.* 17.18.5-6; *ANF* 8:322; Num 12:6-7; Exod 33:11). The Homilist understands God's choice not to reveal himself directly to the prophets as a form of God's wrath. This explanation corresponds to the Clementine rejection of any prophecy not derived from the true prophet. On the other hand, the direct revelation to Moses, a manifestation of the true prophet, demonstrates God's favor. Peter is quick to mention that his knowledge has come directly from Jesus, another manifestation of the true prophet of God. In effect, the basis of Paul's teaching is rendered false according to the Pseudo-Clementines.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Bigg, "The Clementine Homilies," 177 n.1 contains a list of possible Pauline references in the *Homilies*.

¹⁴² Gieschen, "The Seven Pillars," 68 and n.55.

¹⁴³ Gieschen, "The Seven Pillars," 69.

¹⁴⁴ Schoeps, "Ebionite Christianity," 220-221.

This conclusion was further supported by the rejection of Jesus' sacrifice. The Clementine community seems to have interpreted the destruction of the temple and the subsequent end of sacrifices as part of God's plan. References to the rejection of sacrifice and blood are peppered throughout the Pseudo-Clementines. Paul's notion that Jesus' death was an atoning sacrifice was too paradoxical for the authors to accept.¹⁴⁵ Paul was clearly a target of the Clementine rhetoric.

Taylor suggests that the polarization evident in the writings of the religious authorities likely began in the second century due to Marcion's radical criticism of the content of the Jewish scriptures. Churches were forced to choose between two Christs: Marcion's who had been severed from his Jewish tradition or the Jewish-Christian Christ who embraced the Jewish law and fulfilled the biblical prophecies. "People who behaved like Jews, in any way, practical or ideological, were Jews."¹⁴⁶ The issue of religious authority is often a question of scriptural interpretation. Shortly before their first encounter, Peter states that "Simon comes to do battle with us, armed with the false chapters of the Scriptures" (; *ANF* 8:239.3.3). The weapons of this battle are the differing interpretations of the Jewish scriptures. The Homilist's claim over the existence of false passages functions to counter the interpretations of many Gnostic groups in general while Marcionite theology on a more specific level. Given Simon's interest in identifying polytheism within scripture, more specifically the existence of a supreme god who is above a creator god who established the scriptures, it is very likely that the Homilist was engaged in a battle over religious identity with the Marcionites.

3.5. Conclusion

Given the above analysis, I would argue that the Homilist's use of the false passages theory to construct identity was motivated by a few social factors. The first was the need to address pagan practices. The influx of Gentiles within the Christian movement of the second through fourth centuries forced the Homilist to address what he considered to be the failings of paganism. The frequent attacks on pagan idolatry indicate that it must have been a problem within the community. As stated above, Strecker suggests that the author's polemics against

¹⁴⁵ Schoeps, "Ebionite Christianity," 222.

¹⁴⁶ Taylor, "Reality of Scholarly Invention?" 325.

paganism might address Gentiles that may have been part of the community.¹⁴⁷ The Homilist states that idolatry is considered the worst of all sins. Those who succumb to the temptation of the false passages decide to eat at the demons' tables and thereby incur divine condemnation. The ability to discern the false passages illustrates the reasons why Gentiles – most likely converts within the community – need to abandon their demonic liaisons. This teaching can only be found through belief in the one God and his servant, the true prophet. Redemption is possible for those Gentiles who are able to properly recognize the false passages and those demonic beliefs and practices that are based on them.

The second factor relates to social competition with Jewish groups. The Jewish tradition and those who follow it are commended and admired by the Homilist. The Jews have received and follow the same instruction as taught by Jesus. The religious authorities are considered the heirs of Moses' teachings from God. At the same time, there are some from the Pharisees and scribes who have not properly guided the faithful. These teachers are condemned according to Jesus' model in the Gospel of Matthew. The possibility exists that the Pseudo-Clementine community was engaged in a conflict over establishing their identity against or alongside a rabbinic community. The condemned Pharisees and scribes might represent the rabbis who, like the Clementine authors, applied a critical hermeneutic to the Jewish scriptures so as to explain the narrative and theological contradictions. Whereas the rabbis penned the numerous inventive *midrashim* on the biblical texts in order to smooth over the various textual difficulties, the *Homilies* crafted the theory of the false passages in response to similar observations in the scriptures. Yet this process of biblical criticism was made possible by the acceptance of particular Christian writings like the Gospel of Matthew. The account of Jesus' teaching supplied one half of the hermeneutical principle of noting contradictions by which the false passages could be discerned.¹⁴⁸ In the end, the two groups developed in opposing directions; the rabbis resolved their issues by developing midrash as a supplement to explain the scriptures while the Homilist rejected and presumably deleted certain passages from the scriptures, including practically all of the prophetic writings. The relationship with the rabbinic authors was one factor that appears to have contributed to how the Homilist shaped the identity of his community.

¹⁴⁷ Strecker, "On the Problem of Jewish Christianity," 262 [264].

¹⁴⁸ The other half being the recognition of contradictions through a rational exegesis of statements from the Jewish scriptures alone.

Finally, perhaps the most important factor that affected the Homilist's sense of group identity was the threat of Marcionism. Marcionite theology would have been a greater threat to the Pseudo-Clementine community than it was to either Ptolemy's ideas in his *Letter to Flora* or the teaching of the *Didascalia*. The Marcionites considered the Jewish scriptures invalid; only the teachings of Christ mattered. The Homilist equates the teachings of Moses with Jesus to contest this idea. The theory of the false passages seems to be a concession to Marcion's biblical criticism which enjoyed its own popularity in the Syrian locale of the Pseudo-Clementine community. While the rabbis supplemented the scriptures with their own additional stories, and Marcion uprooted the Christian message from any obligation or relation to the Jewish scriptures, the Homilist took a third path that involved invalidating problematic parts of the scriptures while actively preserving the authority and divinity of other portions – all under the auspices of his understanding of the guidance offered by Christ, the true prophet. Perhaps conceding some ground to the Marcionites, the Homilist admits that the scriptures are vulnerable to corruption. However, the Homilist transforms this apparent weakness into a position of superiority by further explaining that the true God and his authentic teachings can only be recognized by Christ's teaching on the false passages – a hermeneutic that has only been transmitted to Peter.

F.S. Jones has offered an interesting and convincing analysis of the means of self-identification in the Pseudo-Clementines.¹⁴⁹ He observes that the author of the *Circuits of Peter* does not consider the group Hebrews or Gentile followers of Jesus. Instead, this group is made of those who worship God, or θεοσεβής (*Hom.* 11.16.2; *ANF* 8:288; *Rec.* 5.34.1; *ANF* 8:151-152). He notes that this term, which was used by Christian and Jewish groups, is a cognate of the Greek term εὐσεβεία (“worshipper of God”).

Although the vagueness of Jones' definition accurately reflects the ambiguous nature of the self-identity of the Pseudo-Clementine community, I believe that the self-designation of θεοσεβής can be further explained. I accept Jones' conclusion regarding the self-identity represented by the *Circuits of Peter*, though I would suggest that the contributing factors discussed above may have been relevant only to the Homilist. Differences between the *Homilies* and *Recognitions* might be a reflection of the changing social and religious landscape from the earlier source common to each text. The prevalence of the false passages theory in the *Homilies* signals the author's distinctive utilization of the true prophet Christology as well as his interest in

¹⁴⁹ Jones, “Jewish Christianity of the *Pseudo-Clementines*,” 328-332.

constructing an identity apart from Jewish and Christian groups in the Syrian region. Thus, the Homilist qualifies the self-designating phrase “worshippers of God” by means of the false passages. The usage of θεοσεβής relates to the descriptions of Greek and Jew.

θεοσεβής γὰρ οὗτός ἐστιν, ἃ ἐγὼ φημι, ὁ ἄνω θεοσεβής, οὐχ ὅς ἂν μόνον λέγεται, ὁ δὲ ὄντως ὡν τοῦ δοθέντος αὐτῷ νόμου ἐκτελεῖ τὰς προστάξεις. εἴαν τις ἀσεβής, εὐσεβής οὐκ ἐστίν. ὅνπερ τρόπον εἴαν ὁ ἀλλόφυλος τὸν νόμον πράξῃ, Ἰουδαίος ἐστίν, μὴ πράξας δὲ Ἕλλην· ὁ γὰρ Ἰουδαίος πιστεύων θεῷ ποιεῖ τὸν νόμον, δι’ ἧς πίστεως καὶ τὰ ἄλλα τὰ ὀρεσιν εἰκότα καὶ βαροῦντα μεθίστησιν πάθη. ὁ δὲ μὴ ποιῶν τὸν νόμον δῆλον ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ μὴ πιστεύειν θεῷ λειποτακτεῖ καὶ οὕτως ὡς οὐκ Ἰουδαίος ἀμαρτωλὸς διὰ τὴν ἀμαρτίαν ἐπικρατεῖται ὑπὸ τῶν εἰς τὸ τιμωρεῖν τοὺς ἀμαρτάνοντας καθεστῶτων παθῶν. (Hom. 11.16.2-4; ANF 8:288)¹⁵⁰

As this passages indicates, membership in the community was dependent upon the proper execution of God’s laws. Yet, the scriptures have been corrupted with false passages to confuse and trick humanity. Therefore, knowledge about the existence of inauthentic scripture and the proper means to discern it from the genuine teachings of God is a critical aspect of communal identity. To properly worship God each member must avoid the practices associated with the false passages, uphold the traditions supported by the *Homilies*, and disregard false prophecy. These aspects of Clementine religious life are constructed by the explanation of the false passages.

¹⁵⁰ “For he is a worshipper of God, of whom I speak, who is truly pious, not one who is such only by name but who really performs the deeds of the law that he has been given. If any one acts impiously, he is not pious. In like manner, if he who is of another tribe keeps the law, he is a Jew. But he who does not keep it is a Greek. For the Jew believes God and keeps the law, by which faith he removes also other sufferings, though like mountains and heavy. But the one who does not keep the law is clearly a deserter by not believing in God and thus is not a Jew but a sinner, since by his sin he is brought into subjection to those sufferings which are ordained for the punishment of sinners.”

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

1. Common Elements of the False Scripture Argument

The introductory chapter stated that the aim of this project was to provide a detailed investigation of three texts that introduce the idea that the scriptures contain false passages. Furthermore, the introduction suggested that the authors of the *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*, the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, and the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* utilized the false scripture argument to construct forms of Christian identity. In the chapters that followed, each text was treated individually in order to appreciate the unique presentations of the false scripture argument.

As we have seen elsewhere in this study, the existence of texts necessitated the need for authoritative interpreters.¹ As G. Stroumsa has pointed out, there is a two-fold, or “double helix,” mode of textual interpretation among Christian hermeneutics where the Christian writings are the lens with which to understand the Jewish scriptures.² The battles waged among and between the ancient texts reflect the dynamic process of identity construction. “Possession of the scriptures, ‘yours’ or ‘ours’, now meant to the exclusive right to interpret them, and to find in them the anticipation both of present convictions and of the opposing unbelief and disobedience. The image of the Jews is a function of these conflicting needs, and shifts accordingly.”³ The false scripture argument was one outcome of the battle between Jews and Christians as well as among Christians over the proper interpretation of the scriptures.

The false scripture writings described a new manner of religious life for their respective communities. The introduction of descriptions and alterations of religious traditions entails a change from what previously existed to something novel. The ensuing transformation requires some sense of management to present the changes as confirmed and established. One function of

¹ Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 60.

² Stroumsa, “Hermeneutical Revolution,” 13.

³ Lieu, *Image and Reality*, 280.

the literature is to encourage, manage, and circumscribe the proposed identity.⁴ The espoused changes of identity may reflect the tendency of the community or simply the ideals of a single author; yet the source, individual or otherwise, is often disguised since the paradigm of identity is embedded within literature. The author invites the audience/reader into the constructed reality of the text in order to encourage the adoption of the new paradigm.⁵ Texts serve as vehicles for, and verification of, identity. They are also the arena where identity is challenged and championed.⁶

Texts also function to establish a particular lineage to offer a historical foundation to support the newly introduced identity. Frequently, that history is a reconfiguration of a competitor's tradition designed to validate the newer community by appropriating the prestige and acceptance of that competitor. Texts recreate the past according to the way they remember the events; at the same time, textual remembering involves the purposeful forgetting or rejecting of certain traditions.⁷ By recognizing and dismissing the other, a text is able to explain why certain traditions are not welcome within the author's community. In this way, texts function to present the history of its members, validate their place in the world, and educate or orient new members to the proposed model of identity.

My work on the false scripture argument has filled a gap in scholarship. The false scripture argument is a peculiar manner of scriptural hermeneutics that has not received the scholarly attention it deserves. The few obscure texts analyzed in the previous chapters present an argument that the scriptures contain laws and regulations that were not established by God. Although these traditions were supposedly instituted by God, either directly through the narrative or indirectly delivered by human emissaries, the authors of the false scripture writings consider them to be false since they create contradictions in religious practice. Elements of scripture are found to contradict other portions of scripture or even the teachings of Christ. This situation is perceived by our authors as indications that scripture can be divided into authentic and false categories.

⁴ Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 14-15.

⁵ Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 61.

⁶ Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 30.

⁷ Lieu *Christian Identity*, 62-65.

On occasion, scholars have previously commented on the false scripture argument in individual texts or, less frequently, noticed the parallels between some or all of these writings. Yet, this dissertation has dedicated the needed attention to the false scripture argument that is lacking in most previous discussions. Along the way, I have pointed out how this literary strategy functions as means of identity construction for early Christian communities whose identity had not yet congealed, in a religious atmosphere where Jews and Christians struggled to understand how “we” are different from “them.” In this light, this project has further contributed to our understanding of Jewish-Christian and intra-Christian relations in the second through fourth centuries.

Yet the project is not complete. What remains is a comparison of the false scripture writing for two reasons. The first reason is to demonstrate that a common rhetorical tactic aimed at illustrating the existence of false scripture exists within *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*, the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, and the *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies*. To accomplish this goal, the overlapping elements of these texts must be examined so as to present a type of blueprint of the argument. In the process, the existence of the rare hermeneutical style of false scripture comes into focus. The second reason is to discuss whether the false scripture writings are dependent upon one another. The latter aim is somewhat connected to the first. If we are able to establish a level of literary dependency or a significant amount of intersection among the texts, the connections might indicate that some borrowing may have occurred among the authors.

The analysis presented in the previous chapters illustrates that *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*, the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, and the *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies* all share a common framework. There are significant points of overlap among the three writings. These commonalities indicate the existence of hermeneutical strategy regarding of the false scripture argument. Each of the false scripture writings claims that the scriptures contain God's true laws as given to Moses. However, the “true” law has also been tainted by the insertion of false material. Those who follow Christ and his apostles are able to learn the proper tradition of discernment to distinguish the true passages from the false ones. In so doing, these followers join a community of the faithful who believe themselves superior to their competitors.

A. *The scriptures contain God's regulations as provided to Moses.*

Ptolemy's Letter to Flora explains that the Mosaic law contains regulations that are derived from the High God. Although instituted by the creator god, these laws were fulfilled by Christ. More specifically, Ptolemy identifies this pure law as the Decalogue (*PtFlora* 33.5.3), described as such since they have not intermingled with any inauthentic elements. According to Ptolemy, god's laws (that is, the laws established by the demiurge) can be further divided into three sub-categories: the pure law of the Decalogue, the laws that are to be abolished by Christ, and symbolic laws that were meant to be understood allegorically (*PtFlora* 33.5.1; 6.1-5). The laws expunged by Christ are false since they contradict the pure laws encapsulated in the Decalogue. Yet, the allegorical laws reflect the struggle over the issue of scriptural interpretation in the latter half of the second century.

The *Didascalia Apostolorum* also confirms that the scriptures contain regulations established by God. The authentic law was delivered to Moses at Mt. Sinai before the Israelites worshipped the golden calf (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:225). Once Moses descends and witnesses the idolatry, he destroys the law tablets. Shortly after, Moses re-ascends the mountain to receive God's laws a second time. This *deuterosis*, or Secondary Law, penalizes the People by engendering a more complicated religious life by mandating practices such as sacrifices, the Sabbath, and circumcision (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:226-227). However, the authentic law of God continues to exist alongside the second legislation.

According to the Homilist, the scriptures contain the written words of God. Although God's law cannot be negated, it can, in written form, be obscured by the false passages (*Hom.* 3.9.1-10.4; *ANF* 8:240). As explained in the *Homilies*, one way to identify the false passages is by recognizing contradictions throughout the various sacred writings. When contradictions arise, the faithful reader relies on the knowledge that God is good and just; he will then distinguish the true scripture from the false (*Hom.* 3.42.3; *ANF* 8:246). The Homilist's hermeneutic assumes the existence of a significant portion of authentic material in the scriptures, more so than the other two authors.

B. The scriptures also contain false passages that are not equal to God's perfect and immutable laws.

As discussed elsewhere, Ptolemy presents a tripartite division of the law: the law of Moses, the law of the elders, and the law of the demiurge. The last category is divided further into three subdivisions: the pure law, the laws abolished by Christ, and the symbolic law. Although the pure law is derived from the high god, the regulations instituted by Moses, the elders, and the demiurge do not reflect the perfect nature of the high god. Ptolemy's implies that since these laws are not authentic, they may be disregarded (*PtFlora* 33.4.14; 7.8). Furthermore, the inferior laws of the demiurge are only acceptable when verified by Christ – especially since Christ abolished certain of these ordinances.

The Didascalia Apostolorum does indicate that there are commands and regulations that were meant as a temporary punishment (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:237). Although the elements of the second legislation originated with God, they are not equated with the original laws of God provided before the golden calf event. According to the Didascalist, the tenets of the second legislation are temporary in nature (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:227-228). Christ has removed the yoke of the second legislation from the faithful; yet, there are still some, likely both Jews and Gentiles, who continue to follow the ways of the second legislation, supposedly ignorant of the punishment they have inherited (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:230-231, 233).

The *Homilies* explains that the scriptures contain genuine as well as spurious words (*Hom.* 3.49.2; 50.2; *ANF* 8:247-248). In the *Homilies*, the false passages have been inserted into the written law by the forces of Satan (*Hom.* 2.38.1; *ANF* 8:245). Peter acknowledges how the written scriptures are vulnerable to such an attack. Satan's actions are motivated by a loving faithfulness to God (*Hom.* 3.5.1-4; *ANF* 8:239). The interpolations are designed to test humans. While the faithful refuse to lend credibility to the false passages, the wicked are ensnared by the apparent contradictions in the scriptures. The Homilist attempts to distance God from the temptation of the false passages. Yet, God created Satan for this devious purpose (*Hom.* 20.3.1-7; *ANF* 8:339).

C. It is possible for believers to discern the authentic portions from the false ones by following the model of Christ.

Each text presents the words and actions of Christ (or, more often, his lack of action or participation) as a litmus test for verifying or dismissing elements of the scriptures. According to Ptolemy, Christ is the redeemer emissary sent into the world by the High God to abolish the inauthentic aspects of the Mosaic law while simultaneously validating the true laws (*PtFlora* 33.4.11; 5.3; 6.1; 7.9). That Christ has arrived to discern the true law from the temporary inferior law is explained also in the *Didascalia Apostolorum* (e.g. DA 26, *CSCO* 408:243). In the *Homilies*, Christ is the latest manifestation of the true prophet who has appeared throughout time to teach the true law of God (*Hom.* 3.20.2; *ANF* 8:266). Specifically, this entails learning about the existence of false passages embedded in the scriptures that must be avoided by the faithful. Once again, the Christ figure is understood as embodying the authentic laws in both his thoughts and actions. All of the false scripture writings adamantly insist on the importance of Christ in discerning false scripture.⁸

D. A tradition of discernment has been transmitted by well known followers of Christ.

Each author's construction of social identity is validated by appropriating key figures of the Christian tradition. Ptolemy learned of the tripartite division of the cosmos from his teacher Valentinus; yet Valentinus' teacher was a follower of Paul. As explained in chapter two, Ptolemy's apparent appropriation of Paul's prestige and authority would have had the effect of validating his ideas among his own followers (*PtFlora* 33.3.6; 5.15; 6.6⁹). In the eyes of his community, Ptolemy's knowledge is superior to other teachers of the time, even those who, like Marcion, also claim some type of interpretative lineage from Paul (*PtFlora* 33.3.2-3; 3.8; 7.9).

The twelve disciples, Paul, and James – that is, those who were in attendance at the Jerusalem Council – are the supposed authors of the *Didascalia Apostolorum* (DA 24, *CSCO* 408:214). The text explains the nature of the second legislation and warns its audience against

⁸ It should be noted, however, that in the *Homilies* Moses is also a valid teacher of the true law. Those who follow only Moses are also eligible for salvation since, according to the text, Moses and Christ teach the same material.

⁹ *PtFlora* 33.6.6 mentions the disciples along with Paul, perhaps indicating an attempt to appropriate the authority of Christ's original disciples as well.

participating in its various tenets (DA 2, *CSCO* 402:15-16). Such a message must have had a strong impact on the third-century community that utilized the Didascalia. Not only was Christ aware of the second legislation, as the text explains, but his original disciples were as well. Rejecting the second legislation meant that the Didascalist's community was part of a prestigious lineage; the community's practices constitute the same observances demanded by God in the original provisions of the Mosaic law.

According to the *Homilies*, Peter functions to convey the method of discernment espoused by the True Prophet (Christ). Peter stars in the Homilist's novel as the conduit of Christ's teaching. He has inherited the esoteric teachings of Christ regarding the existence of the false passages.¹⁰ Clement struggles to learn this information in order to understand Peter's refutations of Simon Magus. The authority of Peter is then transferred to Clement who, according to the Letter to James, is chosen by Peter to take a key leadership position. In this fashion, the Homilist attaches authority to his community as the heirs of Christ's knowledge who recognize the true and false things in the scriptures.

There is another observation relevant to the current issue. The authors of the false scripture writings earnestly defend the reputation of their respective cultural heroes. Even Ptolemy, who downplays the importance of Moses and the elders since they inserted their own human laws alongside the divine ones, relies on the reputation of Paul. The respect for the patriarchs, most evident in the *Homilies*, should be understood as a reflection of the favoritism these individuals found in God. Adam, Moses, and others were entrusted with God's divine regulations. By aligning themselves with the patriarchs, the authors of the false scripture writings subtly appropriate the divine favoritism and validity to their respective communities. In addition, the lineage connecting the author's contemporary community with the cultural heroes of the past presents the former as the true heirs of the scriptures and, subsequently, the authority to properly interpret these writings. In short, the socio-religious identity of the community is validated by this rhetorical strategy.

¹⁰ The importance of Peter to the Pseudo-Clementines is a central topic of Nicole Kelley's *Knowledge & Religious Authority in the Pseudo-Clementines: Situating the Recognitions in Fourth Century Syria*.

E. The faithful are initiated into a tradition of discernment and can therefore follow the true path set forth in God's actual laws.

Each author of the false scripture writings presents the practices and beliefs of his community as the realization of God's original law. This is so because the community has been able to discern the authentic laws from the false ones. As the texts indicate, whether overtly as in *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora* (*PtFlora* 33.3.8; 7.9) and the *Homilies* (*Hom.* 2.40.4; *ANF* 8:236) or indirectly as in the *Didascalia* (*DA* 24, *CSCO* 408:214), the benefit of group membership is to know how to avoid the obstacles of the false material and thereby achieve the religious life originally envisioned by God's true laws. Adhering to those approved practices considered authentic by the false scripture argument functions to maintain the community's sense of identity. Religious life is the enactment of the community's beliefs.

The ability to distinguish true passages from false ones is a crucial element in the construction of social identity in these three texts. Each author depicts one notion of Christianity out of many possibilities. It is difficult to ascertain whether the identity presented in each text is descriptive or prescriptive or, to use Lieu's phrase, image or reality.¹¹ Each text likely contains a certain degree of each, though it may be impossible to know the religious-social landscape that produced a text. Nevertheless, the false scripture writings engender their own sense of what constitutes authentic religious tradition.

2. Explaining the Commonalities

If a literary strategy of false scripture exists, as I argue, then it is possible that one of the authors might have known of, or was in possession of, at least one of the other two texts. The existence of common elements would be a result of one author borrowing from another. As discussed in the chapters above, *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*, the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, and the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* represent the second, third, and fourth centuries, respectively. The latter two have been located in Syria. Therefore, it is not absurd to consider that the Didascalist, for example, was aware of Ptolemy's letter, or the Homilist drew on the works of either of the two previous authors, especially the *Didascalia*. Furthermore, Ptolemy may have known the *Kerygmata Petrou*, an early source of the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*. Another option is that it

¹¹ Where image refers to the social identity presented by the text which may or may not accurately reflect the reality of the community's social life.

is also possible that there was a common pool of shared ideas that the three authors drew upon – an idea that precludes any direct literary dependency.

Based on the investigations in the previous chapters, there is no evidence to support the claim that these authors had direct access to each others' work. In order to maintain the argument that a certain text (or texts) was literary dependent upon another, significant linguistic consistencies as well as portions of the texts' content would need to overlap. According to my analysis of the three false scripture writings, no such data exist. The details of each text's version of the false scripture argument are so varied that only minor coincidences occur at best.

Although there is no evidence that one author directly borrowed from the text of another, this does not mean that there is no trace of literary dependency. It is possible that one of the false scripture authors was aware of another's work but that it was not used directly in the composition of the later work. The overlapping elements discussed in the first part of this chapter may indicate that a common formula was used by our three authors. Each author may have faced a common threat, or perhaps different threats that these authors responded to in similar fashions, that necessitated the composition of a communal text. What I suggest is that some intertexture exists among the false scripture writings.

Intertexture, according to Vernon Robbins, explains how texts from similar historical and sociological contexts draw on a shared pool of symbols, language, and expression. The result is the existence of common literary elements that cannot be explained through source analysis.¹² In her discussion of rhetorical criticism, Patrica K. Tull describes intertextuality in terms of how properties of a text are inseparable from associations made with other texts.¹³ In discussing intertextuality in terms of Bakhtin's theories on dialogism, Tull explains that a text reflects an author's various ideas and attitudes on a subject that may be in conflict with one another. That is to say, a text represents not only the author's decision on a given subject, but often times it includes the reasoning process on how the author came to that decision. Furthermore, a text's

¹² See Vernon Robbins, "The Present and Future of Rhetorical Analysis" in *The Rhetorical Analysis of Scripture: Essays from the 1995 London Conference* (ed. Stanley Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht; England: Sheffield, 1997), 24-52 (31-2); *idem*, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society, and Ideology* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 30-33.

¹³ Patrica K. Tull, "Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality" in *To Each Its Own Meaning: Biblical Criticisms and their Application* (Revised edition; ed. Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 156-180 (165).

content includes “competing answers to the same question, competing constructions of the same event, competing views of the same world, differing characterizations and valuations of the same idea, and a profusion of other voices already speaking before the text adds its voice.”¹⁴ One rhetorical tactic is to present an organized attack against a pre-existent position in society. Thus, the author of a text composes that material with certain posturings already in mind.

This notion of intertextuality can be applied to the false scripture writings. Each of our authors is aware of pre-existing ideas that the portions of the Mosaic law are no longer valid for Christians since the advent of Christ and his ministry. There were likely members within society who observed a conflict between the teachings of the scriptures and those of Christ. The particular authors under discussion here provide a text that offers a kind of handbook to explain the apparent contradictions in those writings considered sacred. While the arguments in each of the false scripture writings contain common elements and sometimes even certain terms, such as *deuterosis*, each manifestation of the false scripture argument reflects the author’s unique social context; that is, the social competitors and existing theological assumptions present in the author’s time.

For example, both *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora* and the *Didascalia Apostolorum* utilize the term *deuterosis* to indicate some type of secondary law provided to the Israelites. Ptolemy uses the term twice. In the first occurrence, he associates *deuterosis* with the example of Moses allowing divorce (*PtFlora* 33.4.8). In the second, the *deuterosis* is understood as a second provision of certain laws, such as allowing a murderer, to be punished with murder (*PtFlora* 33.5.6). This second notion is similar to the way the Didascalist uses the term *deuterosis* throughout his text. However, as explained extensively in chapter 2, the notion of *deuterosis*/second legislation is considerably more developed in the *Didascalia*. It is interesting that both authors described the notion of inauthentic law with the same term. Yet, the use of the same word is where the similarities stop. In the end, I find no reason to conclude that the *deuterosis* found in the *Didascalia*’s model is based on Ptolemy’s paradigm of a tripartite division of the Mosaic law.

The *Didascalia* has stronger similarities to the *Epistle of Barnabas* than to *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora* or the *Homilies*. Both the *Didascalia* and *Barnabas* cite the golden calf incident as the point in history when God’s favor began to shift from the Jews (DA 2, *CSCO* 402:15;

¹⁴ Tull, “Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality,” 168.

EpBarn 4:8, 14; 14:3-4; *ANF* 1:139, 146). Each text claims Christ is the representation of the Decalogue, the “Ten Words,” since his name indicates the number ten (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:223.; *EpBarn* 9:7; 15.1; *ANF* 1:142, 146). In addition, those who follow Christ are considered the new community of the faithful (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:243; *EpBarn* 5:7; 6.11, 14; 13:1-5; *ANF* 1:139-141, 145). Both texts also denounce the Jews for misunderstanding the Mosaic laws (*EpBarn* 3:6; *ANF* 1:138). Like the Didascalia, the *Epistle of Barnabas* denounces the practices of sacrifices (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:225, 229; *EpBarn* 2:4, 10; *ANF* 1:137-138), fasting (DA 21, *CSCO* 408:191; *EpBarn* 3:1; *ANF* 1:138), idolatry (DA 7, *CSCO* 402:88; *EpBarn* 4:8; *ANF* 1:139), circumcision (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:222; *EpBarn* 9:3-5; *ANF* 1:142), the Sabbath (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:235; *EpBarn* 15:8; *ANF* 1:146-147), as well as the inception of schisms (DA 23, *CSCO* 408:204; *EpBarn* 19:12; *ANF* 1:148). However, the *Epistle of Barnabas* does not refer to the existence of false scripture. Instead, *Barnabas* claims the Jews are unable to properly understand the scriptures (*EpBarn* 10:12; *ANF* 1:143).

As I argued in chapter two, Ptolemy appears to be the first to present the false scripture argument. Although Marcion seems a more likely candidate for such an innovation, recall that Marcion does not present the scriptures as containing both authentic and false material. Instead, he considers the scriptures the receptacle for the musings of an inferior deity. On the other hand, Ptolemy redeems the Decalogue as mirroring the pure law of the High God and claims that certain Mosaic laws were perfected by Christ. As argued in chapter two, Ptolemy’s tripartite analysis of the Mosaic law does appear to have been influenced by Marcionite theology. However, Ptolemy also appears to have tempered Marcion’s radical views with those of Valentinus. If we can trust the dates and locales associated with the Didascalia and the *Homilies*, there is no indication that Ptolemy was aware of either of these two writings.¹⁵

Ptolemy’s tripartite model of the Mosaic law is not found in the other two texts. In addition, the other two texts do not introduce a demiurge figure who supposedly instituted inauthentic scripture. It is true, however, that the *Homilies* is similar to *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora* in asserting that the false passages were inserted into the scriptures by other agents, whether Satan (*Homilies*) or Moses and the elders (Ptolemy). Despite the similarity, the intention of

¹⁵ Yet, it is possible that Ptolemy might have known of the existence of the *Kerygmata Petrou*. However, since Ptolemy’s tripartite paradigm of the Mosaic law differs substantially from the ideas in the *Homilies*, I am not inclined to accept such an idea.

Ptolemy's demiurge was to provide just laws. The "wicked one" of the *Homilies*, however, interpolated the false passages in order to lead the unrighteous away from God and discern the true believers from the false ones. Therefore, it seems unlikely to consider that the Homilist was aware of Ptolemy's work.

Connolly argues that the Didascalist was an educated and well-read person who searched a variety of sources to understand the nature of the *deuterosis*. It is possible, Connolly maintains, that the Didascalist was familiar with the attempt to explain the ceremonial law in the earlier¹⁶ writing by Ptolemy. "Whether or no[t] the author of the Didascalia had read this letter it is impossible to say; but it is likely enough that he was acquainted at first hand with analogous discussions of the Old Law."¹⁷ However, van Unnik argues against Connolly's conclusion by stating that the "Didascalia is in no way a modification of the theory of Ptolemaeus" since the materials used to construct each author's model vary so widely.¹⁸ Ptolemy's scheme includes a demiurge figure who was one of three sources for the law other than God not found in the Didascalia (or the *Homilies* for that matter). Furthermore, Ptolemy makes no reference to the issue of apostasy and the golden calf incident that is so critical to the Didascalia. Once again, I submit that the Didascalist did not use *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora* as a source for his own work.

Yet, van Unnik states: "But, from a historical perspective it simply cannot be maintained that Ptolemaeus and the Didascalia are variations of the same theme."¹⁹ I disagree with this conclusion on the grounds that there are other aspects of the two writings that overlap. For example, both texts claim that the Decalogue is the only pure law, both believe Christ's role was to purge inferior or unnecessary laws, and both generally attempt to explain how portions of the Mosaic law are valid while others are not. I suggest that the differences arise from the religious backgrounds of the two authors. Ptolemy fits the false scripture argument to his Valentinian system while the Didascalist functions within a tradition that echoes the ecclesiastical theology of the emerging Catholic Church. The notion of intertexture may help to explain how both

¹⁶ Connolly dates *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora* to about 160 C.E. (*Didascalia*, lxv), about a century before the *Didascalia Apostolorum*.

¹⁷ Connolly, *Didascalia*, lxvii.

¹⁸ Van Unnik, "Moses' Law," 29.

¹⁹ Van Unnik, "Moses' Law," 30.

authors were generally aware of a similar explanation without necessitating that one author used the work of the other. I do not claim that the Didascalist had direct knowledge of *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora* and subsequently adapted the earlier model of the tripartite division of the law within the Didascalia. There is little evidence to support such a claim. Yet the tendencies of each text are similar and may reflect a less common rhetorical strategy that appears among a limited amount of second through fourth century works.

Connolly notes that there is a parallel between the Didascalia and the *Homilies*. Although he maintains the two writings are somewhat connected (unfortunately, without supplying specific details), Connolly is unsure of the exact dating of either text and is hesitant to argue one text is dependent upon the other.²⁰ He cites Funk's analysis of the Didascalia and the *Apostolic Constitutions*²¹ where Funk argues there is no reason to suppose or invent a literary dependency between the Didascalia and the Pseudo-Clementines. Connolly openly disagrees with Funk on this point.²² It appears that although Connolly was unable to find any adequate evidence for literary dependency, he did notice a level of intertexture between the two writings. Van Unnik also recognized a connection between the Didascalia and the *Homilies*. He observed that the need to ritually wash after intercourse, which is considered part of the second legislation by the Didascalia (DA 26, *CSCO* 408:238-239, 242, 244-245), is prescribed in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* (*Hom.* 7.8.2; *ANF* 8:269).²³ Strecker suggests that the theory of the second legislation found in the Didascalia was not dependent upon the *Kerygmata Petrou*, an early source adapted into the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* through the Basic Writing. He points out that the Pseudo-Clementines do not mention Exodus 32 and the golden calf incident or the notion of two stages of the law – ideas which are so critical in the Didascalia's presentation of the false scripture model.²⁴

²⁰ Connolly, *Didascalia*, lxxxv-lxxxvi.

²¹ Funk, *Die Apostolischen Konstitutionen*, 72.

²² Connolly, *Didascalia*, lxxxvi n.1.

²³ Van Unnik, "Moses' Law," 33.

²⁴ Strecker, "On the Problem of Jewish Christianity," 255-57.

I agree with Connolly, van Unnik, and Strecker that there is no evidence for literary borrowing in either direction between the Didascalia and the *Homilies*. However, it is clear by now that the false scripture writings do share enough of a common framework to argue that they are each part of a larger rhetorical construction. Yet, neither author considers the possibility that the communities of the Didascalia and the Homilies might be engaged in some level of competition, at least on the issue of ritual washing. This claim becomes more likely when we recall that it is believed that both authors wrote in the same region in the third or fourth centuries. However curious the connection might be, I find this conclusion to be more coincidental since the remainder of the texts do not appear to specifically engage the ideas of the other. Perhaps this topic is one of many areas that requires further study in future studies.

3. Implications for Future Study

The present investigation on the false scripture argument presents implications for future study. The discussion of ritual practice requires a more detailed analysis that was beyond the scope of the current form of this project. For instance, the specific religious practices could be investigated further in order to understand how the community represented by each text understands and performs what it believes to be the God's authentic ordinances. The chapters above include a discussion about which practices to which the community must adhere. Yet, further analysis of how these practices are performed, that is, how the sanctioned rituals are executed. Essentially, more attention can be placed on the relationship between the texts, their construction of identity, and the religious practices of the community.

Another point raised earlier in this project involves the use of the golden calf event by patristic authors. Although there are several Christian authors, from Justin Martyr to Ephrem, who utilize the narrative as a polemic against Jews or Jewish traditions, none of these figures go so far as to claim that the targeted Jewish traditions are grounded in false scripture. The Didascalia Apostolorum alone makes this claim. More research is needed to situate the Didascalia among the other Christian works.

In addition, the false scripture argument also has implications on the study of the rise of Islam. As seen in the previous chapters, Christian authors constructed a rhetorical strategy that claimed that certain traditions of the Jews are false. In addition, the Jews, for one reason or another, have not recognized this supposed truth espoused by Christian authors. Yet, this same

argument is leveled by the Muslims against the scriptures used by both the Jews and the Christians.

But there are illiterates among them who are unacquainted with the Book, but with lies only, and have but vague fancies. Woe to those who with their own hands transcribe the Book corruptly, and then say, "This is from God," that they may sell it for some mean price! Woe then to them for that which their hands have written! and, Woe to them for the gains which they have made!....But they whose only gains are evil works, and who are environed by their sins, – they shall be inmates of the fire, therein to abide for ever; But they who have believed and done the things that be right, they shall be the inmates of Paradise, – therein to abide for ever. (Sura 2.74-77)²⁵

The above passage has obvious connections to the false scripture writings investigated in the previous chapters. Like the Christian writings before it, this Islamic text claims that the scriptures have been corrupted, apparently by the hands of humans. This is the same notion found in *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora* and the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*. In addition, this pericope also explains that those who avoid the corrupted (false?) passages are rewarded with Paradise while those who follow the inauthentic passages are eternally condemned. It can be argued that these words are an attempt to establish social boundaries in the same way that *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*, the Didascalia Apostolorum, and the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* utilized the false scripture argument.

Ibn Hazm, a tenth-century Muslim author, composed his *Treatise on Contradictions and Lies* where he characterizes the texts shared by Jews and Christians as blasphemous, especially toward the prophets, notes historical errors and absurdities, and divine anthropomorphisms, and faults them for incorrect textual transmission.²⁶ In his view, the Torah has been corrupted (1.186-187, 202); it could not have been accurately preserved given the difficult and often catastrophic history of the Jews (1.197-200); the true Torah is not contained in the teachings of Jesus (1.210).

²⁵ Translation from *The Koran* (trans. J. M. Rodwell; Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Co., Inc., 1992), 345-346.

²⁶ Theodore Pulcini, *Exegesis as Polemical Discourse: Ibn Hazm on Jewish and Christian Scriptures* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 57. Ibn Hazm, however, is not the first muslim author to comment on this issue but is used here as an example.

Ibn Hazm concludes that the Torah must be the work “of some impious person, false and mocking” (1.128).²⁷

There are other parallels to the false scripture writings discussed above. Ibn Hazm refuses to accept the Torah’s indictment of Moses or Aaron’s involvement in the golden calf incident. This must be false since Aaron, having witnessed the miracles of God beforehand, would not have chosen such a path; instead he was forced into it (1.163). Moses, also, would have never written such an account (1.162). Also, any attempt to anthropomorphize God (Gen 1.26) or even depict him as angelic manifestations (Gen 18.1-8) are false and blaspheme God’s transcendent nature (1.117-118).²⁸

Ibn Hazm also notices contradictions in the New Testament writings. For example, he claims that Jesus cannot be a son of God since God is not anthropomorphic (2.24). Jesus lies, as seen in Matt 9.18, 23-26 when he claims the girl is not dead – she must be or the miracle would not be necessary (2.25) (108-111). In addition, there are passages in the gospels that appear to point to the actual person of Jesus before his followers corrupted the story of his life. Jesus claims that he is only a man who speaks the truth of God (John 8.40) (2.67); Jesus claims to be only a prophet (Matt 13.57; Mark 6.4; Luke 4.24; John 4.44) (2.36). These traditions have been accurately incorporated within Islam but, according to Ibn Hazm, the Christians now follow incorrect ideas based on false readings.²⁹ I would expect interesting results from a comparison of writings from Jewish, Christian, and Muslim contexts regarding the recognition of supposed contradictory passages or ideas (which is one basis for the false scripture argument as seen in *Ptolemy’s Letter to Flora* and the *Homilies*).

The common elements of the false scripture writings demonstrate the existence of a literary tactic. Despite the similarities in the false scripture writings, there are also differences. Once we look beyond the generalities of the false scripture writings, a number of differences arise in the details. The hermeneutical trend of the false scripture writings can be explained since each author wrote in a social and historical context of competition. Like so many authors of the second through fourth centuries, Ptolemy, the Didascalist, and the Homilist faced the challenge

²⁷ Pulcini, *Exegesis as Polemical Discourse*, 59.

²⁸ Pulcini, *Exegesis as Polemical Discourse*, 83-86.

²⁹ Pulcini, *Exegesis as Polemical Discourse*, 126.

of how to distinguish their groups from others who likely lived in close proximity, perhaps even within the same community. Groups battled over the claim to the scriptures, and the “proper” means to interpret them in an attempt to simultaneously validate their own traditions and disenfranchise those of other groups. The assertion of an elect status retained old members while recruiting new ones. The false scripture argument validated the way in which Christian authors shaped the social identity of their communities.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Kevin M. Vaccarella was born in Somerville, New Jersey in 1973. Along with his parents and two brothers, Kevin later relocated to Lancaster, Pennsylvania. He began his study of religion at the University of Pittsburgh where he focused his interests on the religions of the ancient Mediterranean region. Kevin submitted a senior paper, “The Importance of Josephus’ *Against Apion* in Relation to Christianity,” completing his B.A. degree in 1996.

In 1997, Kevin entered the M.A. program in Religion at the University of South Carolina. While attending, Kevin served as a teaching assistant for “Introduction to World Religions” and was a graduate instructor for “Biblical Literature and History.” He also served as the Graduate Coordinator of Testing Services for the Office of Orientation and Testing while completing his degree. In 2000, Kevin successfully defended his M.A. thesis entitled “Demographics and Israelite Religion: A Reevaluation of the Motivations Behind the Late Monarchic Reforms.” The University of South Carolina along with the Department of Religious Studies awarded Kevin the Rutledge Graduate Scholar Award based on the merit of his thesis research.

After obtaining his M.A. degree, Kevin entered the Religion program at Florida State University. After serving one year as a teaching assistant, he became a graduate instructor for “Introduction to the New Testament” from 2001–2007. The student population recognized Kevin’s performance as an instructor by nominating him for an Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award. In 2007, Kevin defended his dissertation, “Shaping Christian Identity: the False Scripture Argument in Early Christian Literature” to complete his Ph.D. degree requirements.

On a more personal note, Kevin is an avid martial artist. Although he has practiced several different styles since high school, Kevin has studied Aikido since 1993. In addition, Kevin and his beautiful wife, Jenness, enjoy traveling as much as possible and try their best to take advantage of their frequent changes in location.