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Jason Olson

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THE KERYGMATA PETRI RECONSTRUCTED

JASON OLSON

The following are excerpts from the Clementine Homilies as translated in the Ante-Nicene Fathers series. The choice, arrangement, and titles of excerpts follows the reconstruction given by Johannes Irmscher and George Strecker in New Testament Apocrypha, 2.531–41. The Kerygma Petri is known only from the Pseudo-Clementine literature and must be distinguished from the Preaching of Peter quoted by Clement of Alexandria. The Kerygma Petri is a series of fictional sermons of Peter and his disputations with Simon the Gnostic. Though scanty and fragmentary, the evidence concerning Jewish-Christian sects indicates their practices and beliefs were diverse and that there was not one such sect at a certain point in history but a variety of movements at different stages of development. The Kerygma Petri is believed to be a source for the basic document (dating to the third century c.e.) of the Pseudo-Clementines, which was incorporated into the Recognitions and the Homilies of Clement. The Pseudo-Clementines achieved their final form in the fourth century c.e.

The Kerygma Petri is evidence that Jewish Christians continued to obey the Law of Moses long after Jesus’ Resurrection. They believed that Jesus himself had commanded them to do so forever. There is also evidence that the Jewish Christians and even Jesus taught that the Jewish nation is a part of God’s plan and was to be governed by the Law of Moses.

Clementine Homilies 3.51–52

And His sending to the scribes and teachers of the existing Scriptures, as to those who knew the true things of the law that then was, is well known. And also that He said, “I am not come to destroy the law,” and yet that He appeared to be destroying it, is the part of one intimating that the things which He destroyed did not belong to the law. And His saying, “The heaven and the earth shall pass away, but one jot or one tittle shall not pass froth the law,” intimated that the things which pass away before the heaven and the earth do not belong to the law in reality. Since, then,
while the heaven and the earth still stand, sacrifices have passed away, and kingdoms, and prophecies among those who are born of woman, and such like, as not being ordinances of God.

Polemic against Paul: Clementine Homilies 7.19

If, then, our Jesus appeared to you in a vision, made Himself known to you, and spoke to you, it was as one who is enraged with an adversary; and this is the reason why it was through visions and dreams, or through revelations that were from without, that He spoke to you. But can any one be rendered fit for instruction through apparitions? And if you will say, “It is possible,” then I ask, “Why did our teacher abide and discourse a whole year to those who were awake?” And how are we to believe your word, when you tell us that He appeared to you? And how did He appear to you, when you entertain opinions contrary to His teaching? But if you were not opposed to me, you would not accuse me, and revile the truth proclaimed by me, in order that I may not be believed when I state what I myself have heard with my own ears from the Lord, as if I were evidently a person that was condemned and in bad repute. But if you say that I am condemned, you bring an accusation against God, who revealed the Christ to me, and you inveigh against Him who pronounced me blessed on account of the revelation. But if, indeed, you really wish to work in the cause of truth, learn first of all from us what we have learned from Him, and, becoming a disciple of the truth, become a fellow-worker with us.

Peter in this quote is responding to Paul’s preaching against the Law of Moses. Peter is showing the difference between his physical revelation of Christ compared to Paul’s vision. He is accusing Paul of rebellion against him and the other Apostles’s authority. This would support the Jewish Christian claim that Paul was trying to destroy the Law and the Jewish nation.

Clementine Homilies 11.19

Therefore He made use of this memorable expression, speaking the truth with respect to the hypocrites of them, not with respect to all. For to some He 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, for ye make clean the outside of the cup and the platter, but the inside is full of filth.”

Here Peter is quoting from Matthew 23:1–3, where Jesus commands the Jews to obey the Mosaic teachings of the Pharisees. Jesus had trust in some of the Pharisees to teach the Law, but others he considered hypocrites.
Clementine Homilies 11.19

But who is there to whom it is not manifest that it is better not to have intercourse with a woman in her separation, but purified and washed. And also after copulation it is proper to wash. But if you grudge to do this, recall to mind how you followed after the parts of purity when you served senseless idols; and be ashamed that now, when it is necessary to attain, I say not more, but to attain the one and whole of purity, you are more slothful. Consider, therefore, Him who made you, and you will understand who He is that casts upon you this sluggishness with respect to purity.

Peter is commanding the Jewish disciples of Jesus to continue with the ritual Mosaic purification laws.

Conclusion

We hope to find more of these ancient sources that will tell us how the early Jewish Christians saw the Roman world around them, and how they felt about the Law of Moses. These sources argue that Jesus himself taught the Jews to never give up the dream of an independent Jewish national homeland. This would mean Jesus is the protector and preserver of the Jews, and is not equated with the destroyer of the Jews as some Christian commentators have historically portrayed him.