

JESUS CHRIST – THE PERFECT EXEGETE OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

A FEW OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE WAY THE SAVIOUR QUOTED, EXPLAINED AND FULFILLED THE OLD TESTAMENT

Abstract

The life and activity of the Savior are closely related to the Holy Scriptures. By reading the Gospels, we constantly find Jesus Christ referring to the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms. Sometimes the Savior quotes passages from the Old Testament, while other times He briefly refers to certain events or individuals from the past to support His statements. In this study, we aim to analyse how Jesus Christ related to the Old Testament as an exegete. Using *textual criticism*, this research paper will succinctly demonstrate how Jesus Christ quotes, interprets, and applies the Old Testament in His

public ministry. In essence, our work represents an attempt to (re)construct the image of Jesus Christ as an exegete of the Old Testament, with the hope of providing to both lay believers and professional theologians a useful and worthy model to quote, interpret, and apply the words of the Scripture.



Keywords

Jesus Christ, Holy Scripture, Exegesis, Method, Old Testament

Introduction

The life and work of the Saviour are inextricably linked to the Holy Scriptures. In His public activity, Jesus Christ frequently referred to different scenes and persons from the Old Testament to support the teachings or statements He was making to His listeners (Mt 9:13; Hos 6:6; Mk 10:7; Gen 2:24; Jn 8:17; Dt 17:6; Dt 8:3; Mt 4:4, etc.). He was deeply familiar with the Holy Scriptures and utilised them with great dexterity.

Indeed, the Saviour Himself affirmed on one occasion that His entire ministry was driven by a desire to fulfil the Scriptures (Mk 14:49).

Using textual criticism, this paper attempts to determine how Jesus Christ utilised the Holy Scriptures. Specifically, in the first part of the study, we will focus on how the Saviour rendered certain passages from the Old Testament in His public discourse, seeking to find out to what extent they follow the Hebrew Bible or Septuagint. Also, about how Jesus Christ used to quote from the Old Testament, we will try to see whether the quotations that the Saviour reproduced in different contexts are identical to the source texts or whether they are merely paraphrases.

In the second part of this study, we will look briefly at some of the exegetical procedures that Jesus used in interpreting the Old Testament, to see whether the way He dealt with the Scriptures was commonplace for the Jews or, on the contrary, innovative.

Having clarified these issues, in the last part of the paper we will analyse the alignment between the deeds of Jesus Christ and the prescriptions outlined in the Old Testament. He said: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them” (Mt 5:17). Despite this, the Pharisees constantly accused the Saviour of breaking the Law and disobeying the Scriptures, as may be shown, for example, in the dispute between Him and the Pharisees over the Sabbath.

By analysing, one by one, all these elements of how Jesus Christ quoted, explained and fulfilled the Old Testament, we hope, in the end, to present in this work a portrait of the Saviour as the perfect exegete of Holy Scripture, so that, following his example, we may approach these Scriptures in the manner appropriate to find the Word of God.

Jesus Christ quotes from the Old Testament

In Judaism, at the time of the Saviour, the Scriptures were usually kept in the synagogue in the form of scrolls (Lk 4:15-19; Heb 10:7) [1]. Except for a few passages in Aramaic, they were written in Hebrew, the language of worship of the Jews. Even so, in the 3rd century B.C., the Septuagint (the translation of the Holy Scriptures into Greek, first only the Torah, then the other books) appeared among the Jews and became increasingly authoritative, especially in the Jewish diaspora [2].

Although most exegetes seem to agree that Jesus and his disciples used the Septuagint, in our opinion things are not so clear-cut. Probably, indeed, both Christ and his disciples knew Greek to some extent (we have in mind here, on the one hand,

the dialog between Jesus and Pilate, which, if it took place, was most probably in Latin or Greek [3], and on the other hand, the fact that the oldest manuscripts of the Gospels are preserved in Greek), but they certainly did not use this language in their daily life, but Aramaic. Proof of this are the Aramaisms that have survived in the New Testament to this day, including the Greek version: *Rabbuni* (Mk 10:51; Jn 20:16), *Abba* (Mk 14:36), *Talitha koumi* (Mk 5:41), *Eli Eli lema sabachthani?* (Mk 15:34), *Chephas* (Jn 1:42; 1 Cor 1:12; 3:22), *Gabbatha* (Jn 19:13), *Golgotha* (Mt 27:33; Mk 15:22) etc. (Vild 2013, 97-108).

In this context, one of the questions that arise about the Saviour is whether, when quoting from Scripture, He used the Greek text (Septuagint) or the Hebrew text.

Jesus Christ and the Septuagint

Analysing the passages where the Saviour refers to various fragments of the *Old Testament* [4], at first glance it seems quite clear that He used the Septuagint and not the Hebrew text. This can be proved by comparing the source texts with the text reproduced by Jesus, as can be seen in the following two examples:

Deut 8,3 // Mt 4,4

BYZ	Οὐκ ἐπ' ἄρτω μόνῳ ζήσεται ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ παντὶ ῥήματι ἐκπορευομένῳ διὰ στόματος θεοῦ (Mt 4,4)
LXX	οὐκ ἐπ' ἄρτω μόνῳ ζήσεται ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἀλλ' ἐπὶ παντὶ ῥήματι τῷ ἐκπορευομένῳ διὰ στόματος θεοῦ ζήσεται ὁ ἄνθρωπο (Deut 8,3)
WTT	לֹא עַל-תְּלֵחָם לְבַדּוֹ יִתִּיחַ הָאֱלֹהִים כִּי עַל-כֹּל-מוֹצֵא פִי-יִתְּנָה יְיָ יִתִּיחַ הָאֱלֹהִים

As can be seen in this first case, the Septuagint text says that *man feeds on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God*, just as we find in the New Testament, in the Saviour's discourse, in BYZ or NA²⁸. In the Hebrew tradition, on the other hand, this verse appears slightly different, namely: *man feeds on everything that proceeds out of the mouth of God*.

Analyzing the above texts, we notice that the Hebrew version does not use the term *ῥῆμα* (= word), as found in the Greek version, being replaced by the construction *מוֹצֵא* (= *that proceeds from*).

In addition to this main difference, a detailed comparison of the two text versions reveals other possible differences of nuance, such as the fact that the

Hebrew uses the proper name (יְהוָה) for God, while the Greek uses the term Θεός, which has a much broader meaning, being used for deities in general.

Also, in Greek the verb ζάω strictly refers to living (biologically), while in Hebrew the verb יָחַי has a broader meaning, including *to exist, to become or to have*.

Last but not least, Rev. Prof. Eugen Pentiuic says that the term אָדָם in Hebrew is impossible one to translate into any other language, including Greek or Latin. This term designates in Hebrew “that hypostasis of human nature which includes in itself, as a potential, both human genders (male and female), as the whole of humanity, as a totality of human individuals” (Pentiuic 2016, 27), having, therefore, a lexical range different from that of the term ἄνθρωπος, present in the Greek version.

So, comparing the text versions presented above, we cannot say that the Greek source and the Hebrew source are identical. However, since any translation brings with it a certain interpretation, we will say that, naturally, there are certain differences of nuance between the two textual versions, the languages themselves being different. Therefore, we do not insist on these details but rather note only the main difference between the two sources of the verse under analysis, namely the presence/absence in the text of the term ῥήμα / מוֹצֵא, from which we also come to the partial conclusion that, when quoting from the Old Testament, Christ used the Septuagint.

Mc 7, 6-7 // Is 29,13

BYZ	Οὗτος ὁ λαὸς τοῖς χεῖλεσίν με τιμᾶ, ἡ δὲ καρδιά αὐτῶν πόρρω ἀπέχει ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ: μάτην δὲ σέβονται με, διδάσκοντες διδασκαλίας ἐντάλματα ἀνθρώπων (Mc 7,7-8)
LXX	ὁ λαὸς οὗτος τοῖς χεῖλεσιν αὐτῶν τιμῶσιν με ἡ δὲ καρδιά αὐτῶν πόρρω ἀπέχει ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ μάτην δὲ σέβονται με διδάσκοντες ἐντάλματα ἀνθρώπων καὶ διδασκαλίας (Is 29,13)
WTT	כִּי נִנְשׂ הָעַם הַזֶּה בְּכַוֵּן וּבִשְׂפָתָיו כְּבָדוּנִי וְלִבּוֹ רָחַק מִמֶּנִּי וְתֵהִי יְרֵאָתָם אֵתִי מִצְנֵת אַנְשִׁים מִלְמַדָּה

Another example where it seems that the Saviour follows the Greek text and not the Hebrew is Is 29:13 || Mk 7:6b-7. This text is introduced by the Saviour with the formula: “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written”; a construction which indicates quite clearly the Saviour’s intention to quote something from the Old Testament:

WTT: “These people come near to Me with their mouth and honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me^α. The respect for Me that [this people] have is only a human commandment, learned by heart^β”.

LXX: “This people honor Me only with their lips, but their heart is far from Meα. In vain do they honor Me; their teachings are merely human rules^β”.

In this case we note that the Hebrew text is more developed in the first part of the quotation than the Greek text (in section α), and in its second part (section β), the Hebrew expression is slightly changed compared to the Septuagint. Despite these differences, the main idea of the fragment does not change but is the same. However, comparing these two variants with the Saviour’s quotation from the New Testament, and given the details highlighted here, we are once again left with the impression that Jesus followed the Greek text, not the Hebrew, in his teaching.

Jesus Christ and the Hebrew text

In parallel with this first hypothesis, which claims that Jesus Christ followed the Septuagint tradition when quoting from the Old Testament, there are also arguments to the contrary, namely that when referring to events or fragments of the Old Testament, the Saviour used the Hebrew tradition as a source. This seems quite obvious, moreover, if we bear in mind that when He spoke of the Holy Scriptures on his way to Emmaus, the Saviour referred to their traditional division according to Jewish tradition (*TaNak* – Lk 24:27), which we do not find in the Septuagint.

Another element that leads us to believe that Jesus Christ used the Hebrew text as a source for his Old Testament quotations is the fact that more than 1300 *Qetiv-Qere* structures are still preserved in it today [5]. These are small spelling mistakes, which the editors probably made inadvertently, but which the Jews retain in the text, having great respect for the Sacred Writings exactly as they were written. And if the Jews today are so conservative about the sources, the more we can believe that they were so in the Saviour’s time, especially in the context of the bitter struggle between Greek and Jewish culture at that time [6].

However, there are occasions when it appears that Jesus does not faithfully follow either the Septuagint or the Hebrew Bible, but rather uses a text of His own, probably inspired by the oral Jewish culture around Him. This can be seen, for example, in *Mark* 12:30 and *Matthew* 22:37, with *Deuteronomy* 6:5, as follows:

Deut 6,5 || Mc 12,30 (Mt 22,37)

BYZ	καὶ ἀγαπήσεις κύριον τὸν θεόν σου ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας σου, καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ψυχῆς σου, καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς διανοίας σου, καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ἰσχύος σου (Mc 12,30)
LXX	καὶ ἀγαπήσεις κύριον τὸν θεόν σου ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ψυχῆς σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς δυνάμεώς σου (Deut 6,5)
WTT	וְאַהַבְתָּ אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל-לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל-מְאֹדְךָ:

In this example we see that, in comparison with the LXX and the WTT, the text spoken by the Saviour has a small addition, namely that man is bound to love God, not only with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength, but also with all his mind (*καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς διανοίας σου*). This detail proves that the Saviour (or the redactor of the Gospel) enjoyed a certain freedom in interpreting Scripture.

Following Mark, Matthew probably also used targums [7] when he wrote the Gospel, especially since the Hebrew text was not very well fixed in written form at that time (Voineag 2020, 179) [8]. However, this is not exceptional in the New Testament, but can even be found in the Saviour's own right, in the Crucifixion scene, where Jesus himself utters an Aramaic Targum in Psalm 21 (see Ps 21:1 // Mk 15:34; Mt 27:46) [9]. So, the Saviour and the disciples must have been accustomed at that time to the Hebrew text or at least to the Aramaic Targums of the Hebrew text.

One possible explanation: *ipsissima verba* and *ipsissima vox*

Although the Old Testament quotations present in the New Testament seem to follow the Septuagint in most cases, as evidenced by the fragments we have presented above, this does not automatically imply that the Saviour or His disciples did indeed use the Greek text. To explain this fact we will further differentiate between *ipsissima verba* and *ipsissima vox*.

In contemporary biblical hermeneutics the question has been raised whether the Saviour's dialogues with His contemporaries, as we have them today in the New Testament (e.g. Jn 3:1-15; 4:7-30), are exact renderings of Christ's **words** (*ipsissima verba*), written by the hagiographers under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, or did they merely render the Saviour's **voice** (*ipssima vox*); that is, the Saviour's words as they heard them and as each remembered them, then matching Jesus' quotations with the biblical sources they had at hand when they wrote the Gospels.

Given the fact that Christ spoke to His disciples in Aramaic, but His words in the Gospels are rendered in Greek, we believe that their editors, when writing their *memoirs* about Christ [10], assumed the role of both *exegetes* of the Saviour and *teachers*. In this context, in (re)constructing the Lord's words and the quotations he invoked, the editors of the Gospels must have had in mind simultaneously both the Saviour's direct discourse and the Old Testament variants that circulated them; whether Hebrew text, Greek text or even Targums, which were also used in the Synagogue at the time (Safrai 1990, 187-93).

Just as the Evangelist Matthew was placed in the position of an exegete of Scripture when he quoted from Isaiah 7:14, having to choose the best translation from all the possible variants to render as faithfully as possible the mystery of the Lord's birth, which was foretold by the prophets, he was certainly placed in the same position when he wrote down Christ's words in Greek in the Gospel. Thus, in the case of the New Testament, the Hagiographer is the interpreter of Christ who renders His words both by revelation and by his capacities. From this point of view, with regarding the places in which the Savior quoted from the Old Testament, we believe that they are truly His words, rendered through the intermediary of the writers, just as we, in other respects, in the Romanian versions of the Holy Scriptures, have the words of Christ, but in our language, and not in the original. And we do not consider this at all wrong, but on the contrary, an opening towards the original.

So, in terms of the sources used by Jesus Christ to quote from the Old Testament, we are left with the idea that he may have used the Septuagint, the Hebrew text, or even a combination of the two. In any case, the Saviour's quotations are not very rigid, stuck in *Textkritik*, but rather we find a certain elasticity, evidenced by the use of Targums in certain cases, later used by the editors of the New Testament.

Jesus Christ explains the Old Testament

The New Testament says that no one has ever seen God, and the only one who can explain Him (*ἐξηγήσομαι*) is the One who is in the bosom of the Father, Jesus Christ (Jn 1:18).

Throughout the New Testament, Jesus Christ appears several times as the exegete. In Luke 8:11, the Saviour explains to His disciples a parable that He had spoken; on the way to Emmaus, we see Jesus Christ explaining passages from the Old Testament to His disciples (Lk 24:27).

When referring to Old Testament passages, Jesus often introduces them with various specific formulas, such as “you have heard that it was said to those of old...” (Mt 5:21) or “as it is written...”.

Regarding the *method of interpretation*, we have noted that the Saviour used the *gezerah shawah* procedure (*Pontifical Biblical Commission* 2020, 109), as we can see, for example, in Mark 2:25 [11]. This procedure was somewhat known among the Jews at the time. In short, it is based on the idea that all the Holy Scriptures speak of the same God, so to have a clearer vision of Him we can combine various passages of Scripture, as in a puzzle, building a complex picture.

In His discourse, the Saviour quoted and referred to passages from fourteen books of the Old Testament [12]. He mentioned Abraham (Jn 8:56), Jacob and Isaac (Mt 8:11), David (Mt 12:1-3), Solomon (Mt 6:29), Elijah (Mt 17:11), Elisha (Mt 4:27), Zechariah (Lk 11:49-51), whom He understood as historical persons. He also recalled the circumcision (Jn 7:22), the manna received in the wilderness (Jn 6:31), David’s eating of *the bread of the Presence* (Mt 12:3-4), the persecution of the prophets (Mt 5:11-12), the story of Lot’s wife (Lk 17:32), the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Mt 10:14-15); all this, events that are part of Israel’s history. He also appealed in His public discourse to the making of Adam and Eve (Mt 19:4-5), Cain and Abel (Lk 11:50-52) or the flood (Mt 24:37-39), events that are part of Israel’s pre-history. Thus, surely, Christ accepted the authority of the Sacred Writings as an organic whole, without raising issues of textual criticism.

Moreover, in His ministry, the Saviour also referred to the Book of Daniel, which at that time had not yet been fully accepted in Judaism, as had Deutero-Isaiah (Mt 24:15; 8:16-17; Jn 12:39) [13]. Thus, Christ dealt with Scripture naturally and holistically, without getting bogged down in technicalities such as source, author or date of writing. In His dialogue with the Samaritan woman, Jesus made no comparison between the Jewish and the Samaritan Pentateuch, or between the Decalogue used by the Jews and that used by the Samaritans, but simply spoke to the woman based on the Law in general and based on factual reality in particular.

Another exegetical procedure used by the Saviour is called *qol va-homer*. According to this principle, the exegesis of a particular passage or event in Scripture must be developed from the simple to the complex, as we also find in Hillel’s rules. We find this type of discourse in Matthew 7:11 and Luke 11:13 (see Longenecker 1999, 68; France 2002, 127), but also in John 10:34-36, where the Saviour interprets from the

simple to the complex passage from the Old Testament about gods in the context of Psalm 81.

Concerning the direction of investigation of the Sacred Scriptures, the Saviour interpreted the Old Testament texts in a Christocentric sense, clearly affirming that the Scriptures speak about Him and that He came into the world to fulfill them (Lk 4:21; Mt 11:10; Mk 9:12; Lk 21:21). In this regard, the question is, what mean the words: “search the Scriptures and see that they speak about M(m)e” (Jn 5:39)? Was Christ referring to Him personally as the Messiah, or was He referring in general to the fact that the Scriptures speak about us; about each individual reader of Scripture?

The simplest answer to this question is found by reading Tyconius’ first rule of interpretation (see St. Augustine 1886, 569), which says that the whole of Scripture has Jesus Christ at its centre, with the caveat that some passages refer to Christ (head of the Church) and other passages refer to the Church (Body of Christ). So, it sometimes refers to Him personally, and sometimes to us, but never separated from Christ, but in relationship with Him, to know and find Him.

Jesus Christ fulfils the Old Testament

The Saviour said that heaven and earth will pass away (*παρέρχομαι*), but not one letter of the Scriptures will pass away without being fulfilled (Mt 5:18). So, for Jesus Christ, the Sacred Writings were inspired by God, anticipating the events that were to be fulfilled in His time.

From an early age, Christ was accustomed to the temple. This is evidenced by the Gospel of Luke, which states that, at the age of twelve [14], he was in the temple sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions (Lk 2:46). However, an examination of the life and public activities of the Saviour reveals a certain ambiguity with regard to His stance on the Law. For example, the Law of Moses prohibits the consumption of blood, yet Jesus exhorted His disciples at the Last Supper to drink His Blood. The Law of Moses also stipulates that a man must honour his parents. Despite this, Jesus states that anyone who does not hate his parents is not worthy to follow Him. The Pharisees accused the Saviour of failing to adhere to the traditions and practices of his elders (Mt 15:2). Jesus was frequently criticised for not adhering to the Sabbath, for associating with sinners, and even for performing miracles with the assistance of demons. Consequently, the question arises as to whether Jesus complied with the Law of Moses and the Holy Scriptures. So, the questions that arises

in these circumstances are: Did Jesus keep the Law of Moses? Did Jesus respect the Holy Scriptures?

Given the multitude of Pharisee accusations and the large number of controversial scenes concerning Jesus Christ and the Law of Moses, we will not be able to analyse every single case in this paper, but by choosing a few representative situations for this discussion, we hope that it will be enough to create a pertinent opinion on how Jesus Christ fulfilled (or not) the Holy Scriptures.

Jesus Christ and the honouring of parents

In Luke 14:26, Jesus says that “if anyone comes to Me and does not hate (*μισέω*) father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters – yes, even their own life – such a person cannot be My disciple”. This may seem rather strange at first glance, especially since it is written in the Decalogue that man is bound to honour his parents (כְּבֹד – Ex 20:11). A comparison of the Saviour’s statement with the Decalogue reveals a potential for conflict between the two positions. Given this, historical evidence indicates that no reproach has ever been levelled at the Saviour for urging people to hate their parents. Indeed, if He had done so, it would have been widely noted and condemned.

The Saviour’s statement *Εἴ τις ἔρχεται πρὸς με καὶ οὐ μισεῖ τὸν πατέρα ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τὴν μητέρα, οὐ δύναται εἶναι μου μαθητής*’ can only be understood by reading this text in Aramaic, because in Greek the verb *μισέω* mean *to hate*, but in Peshitta appears the verb ܢܦܫܐ/ܢܦܢܐ, which means *to love someone in second place*, as we find in Gen 29:31 or Rom 9:13, where Jacob loved Rachel, and he hated Leah, when, in fact, it is clear that he did not hate her, she still remained in his house, but he only loved her second.

So, in this case, the solution is quite simple knowing that Jesus and the disciples spoke Aramaic. Although in Greek and Latin it may appear that Jesus preached hatred of the parents, in the original there is no question of Jesus Christ preaching in Israel any other teaching than that left to the people by Moses. This fact is proved by the observation that no one ever reproached the Saviour for breaking the fifth commandment of the Decalogue or for preaching its violation. On the contrary, looking at the episode of the Wedding in Cana of Galilee and the episode on Golgotha, it is obvious that Jesus loved, obeyed and cared for the Virgin Mary, his mother according to His human nature.

Jesus Christ and the Sabbath day

For the Jews, the Sabbath is very important. If we look at the biblical version of the creation of the world, we see that God Himself rested after creation (Gen 2:2), and if we read the Decalogue of Moses, we see that the observance of the Sabbath was law for the Jews. In these circumstances, the fact that the Saviour did not always observe the Sabbath rest at certain times scandalised the Jews around Him. For this reason, some of them accused Jesus of not observing the Law of Moses and of causing a disturbance (Meier 2004, 561-81; Weiss 1991: 311-21).

In the Old Testament it is written that Saturday is a day of rest (Ex 20:8-11; Dt 5:12-15) for the whole creation; both for man and the earth (Lev 25:2), i.e. for all of nature. Also, according to the Law, those who disobeyed this custom could even pay with their lives (Nm 15:32-36). However, it seems that throughout history there were quite a few times when the Israelites did not observe the Sabbath (e.g. Neh 13:15-22), and moreover, if we read the Jewish writings, we find exceptions to the Sabbath rest rule. Specifically, the priests could break the Sabbath to bake the showbread (Lev 24:1-8), and people in general could break the Sabbath to save or heal their neighbour (Sab 14:3). Under these circumstances, we can say that the Sabbath was certainly important for the Jews, but that it was not an absurd law, but as the Saviour says: Sabbath is for man, and not man for Sabbath (Mk 2:27).

In relation to Jesus Christ and the observance of the Sabbath, He was accused of allowing the disciples to gather grain on the Sabbath (Mt 12:1-8) and of healing the sick on this day (Mt 12:9-14; Lk 13:10-17; 14:1-6; Jn 5:1-18; 9:1-41) [15]; actions which disobeyed the Holy Scriptures and the Law of Moses.

In the face of these accusations, the Saviour reminds the Pharisees that David, when he was hungry, ate the showbread on the Sabbath, breaking the Sabbath. Jesus also reminds the Pharisees that priests were exempt from the Sabbath law when they prepared the showbread. So the Saviour's actions on the Sabbath were not an extraordinary violation of the Law, but rather a didactic challenge that the Saviour puts before the Jews, to show them once again, using their standard, that the Law of Moses is not an idol and that salvation does not magically come by observing formal provisions, but that the Old Testament and the Law of Moses are only a support for man to approach God in a personal way and to (re)know Him, because the living God is the ultimate instance that brings us redemption, personally, and not a set of rules.

This point is emphasized by the Saviour when he quotes Hosea, saying “I desire love, not sacrifice” (Hos 6:6; Mt 9:13), and when he says that man must first be reconciled to his brother, and only then offer the sacrifice at the altar (Mt 5:23-24); thus clearly underlining that the law is for man, and not man for the Law.

Finally, Jesus’ likening Himself to the priests in disregarding the Sabbath rest suggests to the world that He had come into the world to make an offering for us before God (Heb 9), to redeem us from the bondage of sin. From this point of view, the Saviour presented Himself to the world as the priest of creation through His actions on the Sabbath, His disciples participating both in the slaying of the Lamb and in the breaking of the showbread (In 6:35).

Looking at all these things, we see that Jesus did not overthrow the Law of Moses when He did not keep the Sabbath, but on the contrary, He used an exception to emphasize that He knows the Law and keeps it even at the level of exceptions, on the one hand, and on the other hand, by doing so, He recovers the primary rationale of the Sabbath, emphasizing that the purpose of rest is to serve man and to be of benefit to him, not to restrict him.

Conclusions

That Jesus Christ knew and used the Holy Scriptures is a fact. This can be seen in the public life of the Saviour, where not infrequently He quoted from the Old Testament, referred to events or persons in Israel’s history, interpreted the Law before the crowds and lived according to it amid the chosen people.

With regard to how the Saviour quoted the Scriptures, by analysing the internal evidence of the biblical text, we have shown that it is not very clear whether Jesus Christ used the Septuagint or the Hebrew text. However, in the light of the points we have made in our paper, the most plausible possibility remains that Jesus used the Hebrew text, whether in written or oral form, which was the text that the Jews used at that time in Israel. He read the Holy Scriptures in a unified, holistic and elastic way, even using Targums at certain points, as the editors of the New Testament probably did when they wrote The Holy Text.

Regarding the way of interpreting the Old Testament, we have shown that the Saviour made use of the exegetical procedures of the time, namely *gezerah shawah* and *qol wa-homer*. One particularity that Jesus brought to the interpretation of the

Holy Scriptures is that He always related them to Himself, pointing out that all the Holy Scriptures are Christocentric in character and speak of Him.

On the question of how the Saviour respected the Old Testament and lived according to the Law of Moses, we have pointed out that there are quite a few controversial passages in the New Testament. We have analysed two of them to show that He did not break the Law, but knew it, including what the exceptions meant. Besides, by the way He referred to the Holy Scriptures, He showed the disciples that the Law of Moses is not to be an idol that traps man in rigid ritualism, but it calls man to freedom and eternal Life, and is ultimately a natural opening to our relationship with God.

Notes

[1] In Luke 4 we see that in the synagogue in Nazareth there was a scroll of the prophecy of Isaiah from which the Saviour read, and we can believe that there were other scrolls there. Being hand-written and raw materials being quite expensive at that time, it was very rare for someone to have all the holy scrolls in their library. They often circulated individually between communities.

[2] G. Archer and G.C. Archer Chirichigno states that there are 340 Old Testament quotations in the New Testament, of which 33 are from the Masoretic text and the rest from the Septuagint. See Archer and Chirichigno 2005, 25-32.

[3] Latin was the official language used by the army. Merchants and local administration in the cities generally used Greek. For the languages spoken by the Jews in the time of the Saviour, see Dalman 1922.

[4] The concept of the Old Testament is absent from Judaism because the New Testament is not recognised. St. Paul, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, distinguishes between the New Covenant, which was promised to the people from of old times by God (Jer 33:11), and which was fulfilled in the time of the Saviour, on the one hand, and the Old Covenant between YHWH and Israel, on the other hand. In this sense, for Christians, the holy writings up to Christ remained under the title of the Old Testament (or the First Testament, as some authors call it; according to Heb 9:15), and the holy writings from the time of Christ and after Christ remained under the title of the New Testament. This division of the Bible is a Christian development, accepted by the Jews only formally, in academic or inter-religious dialog, but not cultically accepted.

[5] In contrast to *Qetiv-Qere* structures, in the rabbinic tradition we find the concept of *Tiqqun soferim*. According to this concept, the rabbis have sometimes altered the Holy Scriptures to save God's honor in the world, so that, for example in 3 Kgs 21:12-13,

instead of saying that *Naboth cursed God*, as the text states, they say that *Naboth blessed God*.

[6] A comparable phenomenon is observed in the New Testament, specifically in the Apocalypse. This text contains a considerable number of *solecisms*, or writing mistakes, which have been preserved in the original manuscript without correction. This practice is motivated by a combination of factors, including respect for the individuals responsible for transmitting these texts and the recognition that the original manuscripts may have been influenced by a variety of factors, including the context in which they were created. Furthermore, we have faith that God, if He so wishes, can reveal Himself through any mechanism, including apparent mistakes. This is evidenced by the case of Balaam, in which the Lord spoke to the people through the mouth of a pagan. In regard to the relationship between the Hebrew Text and the Septuagint, it can be stated that the Jews rejected the Greek text, on the grounds that it introduces modifications to Jewish culture through the incorporation of Greek and Egyptian elements, the Septuagint being translated in Alexandria. Furthermore, an examination of the Old Testament manuscripts discovered at Qumran reveals the absence of any variants of the Septuagint. The primacy of the Hebrew text within the Judeo-Christian community is also evidenced by the fact that in Origen's Hexapla/ Octapla, the Hebrew text was positioned on the first column. In turn, St. Augustine argues for the primacy of the Hebrew Text over the Greek. See Augustinus, *De Civitate Dei*, XVIII, 43 – Kaiser 1975, 16.

[7] Targumim are Aramaic paraphrases of the Hebrew text. Sometimes they are quite different from the Hebrew source. For example, in Gen 1:1, the *Neophyte targumim* reads:

מלקדמין בחכמה ברא {ד} יי שכלל ית שמיא וית ארעא

which translates: *From the beginning, with wisdom, the Son (ברא) fulfilled/ made (שכלל) the heavens and the earth*. So, as can be seen, these translations/paraphrases may be more or less faithful to the source text. Moreover, 2 Kgs 18:26 makes a clear distinction between Hebrew and Aramaic, as they are two distinct languages that do not completely overlap.

[8] The existing literature also posits the hypothesis that the Old Testament canon used by Christians was not necessarily aligned with that used by Jews. See Sundberg Jr. 1968, 143-55. It is also noteworthy that the concept of canon did not emerge until the time of St. Athanasius, as can be observed in *Festal Letter 39th*. For further insight, see McDonald 1995, 20.

[9] The words pronounced by the Savior on the cross are not an exact quotation from the Psalms. Rather, they are most likely a paraphrase (Targum) because, as evidenced in the Peshitta, He employs the Aramaic verb שבק, rather than the Hebrew term עזב, which is found in Psalm 21. Furthermore, even in the Greek version, there are

discussions on this construction because Matthew uses the variant Ἠλί, Ἠλί, λεμὰ σαβαχθανί, while Mark prefers Ἐλωϊ, Ἐλωϊ, λαμὰ σαβαχθανί. The Codex Bezae and the Byzantine text both preserved the two distinct constructions, whereas the Codex Alexandrinus and the Western variants led to the standardisation of the two variants.

[10] St. Justin Martyr and Philosopher calls the Gospels ἀπομνημονεύματα τῶν αποστολῶν. See Justin Martyr, *Apologia I*, 67, 3 – Hill 2004, 345.

[11] For example, Luke 4:18-19, composed of Is 61:1 and Is 58:6. See Longenecker 1975, 69; Guelich 2002, 121; Bock 1994, 404.

[12] Mk 10:6-8 – reference to Acts; Lk 18:20 – reference to Revelation; Lk 10:26-28 – reference to Deuteronomy; Mk 2:25 – reference to 1 Kgs; Mt 12:42 – reference to 1 Kgs; Mk 12:10 – reference to Psalms; Mt 13:13-14 – reference to Isaiah; Mt 24:15 – reference to Daniel; Mt 9:13 – reference to Hosea; Mt 12:40 – reference to Jonah; Mt 26:31 – reference to Zechariah; Mt 11:10 – reference to Malachi.

[13] The first Leningrad edition of the Old Testament does not contain the book of Daniel.

[14] In medieval and modern Judaism, around the age of twelve, children are considered religiously mature and welcomed as active members of the community in a ceremony called a *Bar Mitzvah*. This practice did not exist in the time of the Savior.

[15] To these miracles performed on the Sabbath must be added the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, which took place after Jesus and the disciples had left the synagogue (Mk 1:29-31).

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