

The Relationship between the New and the Old Testament

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Abstract. The Christian religion conceives of God as a personal being who does not remain distant or indifferent to creation, but is in connection with it, especially with man, the pinnacle of creation. Thus God communicates to people so that they can know at least in part something about Him and also so that they can know His will and plans in relation to creation and especially in relation to Him. God revealed himself to people in two ways: through natural Revelation, emphasizing man's character as a rational being, and through supernatural Revelation, without which man could not understand the natural one. Likewise, the Revelation was realized throughout the ages, throughout the history of mankind, starting with the discovery made to the first people and culminating with the one given by Jesus Christ. The supernatural divine revelation was transmitted to us in two ways: Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition. We will learn the importance of preserving the Holy Scriptures unaltered, as the source from which Christianity drew the sap of its teachings and found its support throughout its history. We will try to present the fact that the Holy Scripture is a precious help in understanding the divine message and in putting into practice a Christian life that will lead the believer on the path of the Kingdom. It is important that by leaning towards the Holy Scriptures, the Christian should stay on the path of salvation, in the Church, having as an example the Holy Apostles, keepers of Tradition and Scripture, but also their transmitters. Only by intertwining these two ways through which we have the unaltered word of God will we be able to say that we are in the Church of Christ. Only by keeping unaltered the truths contained in Holy Scripture and especially by fulfilling them, we are in Christ and in His mysterious Body - the Church - because Scripture, along with Tradition, was and will be the norm of Christian life until the end of time. That is why we considered it necessary to present the value and importance of the Holy Scripture in its entirety on the foundation of Christian teaching, as well as on its living in the Church. Christ revealed by the Scriptures communicates to people. The Scriptures put and keep Christians in relation to Christ, especially due to the fact that Revelation projects its final goal in eternal communion with the person of Christ, a goal towards which we also advance through our efforts in relations with other people, and this goal is shown in a concentrated manner by the Holy Scripture, the Holy Tradition explaining at every step this road virtually included in the Revelation, as a road leading to the goal of our perfection in Christ. We hope that by researching, as much as possible, the specialized works and studies in theological publications, we will present the importance of the Holy Scriptures as a means of transmitting the saving truth, but also the importance of intertwining the teachings contained in them for a better knowledge and application of divine truths in the Christian life, in The church.

Keywords. Revelation, Holy Scripture, knowledge, faith

Introduction

The Holy Scripture or Bible (βίβλια - book, books), is the collection of holy books written by holy men (prophets, apostles and other chosen men) under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, starting with the prophet Moses, i.e. 1500-1400 years before Christ, until the author of the Apocalypse, i.e. towards the end of the 1st century after Christ, it includes truths of faith, norms of behavior, as well as some historical accounts that God discovered to be written, preserved and transmitted to believers for the purpose of salvation¹.

The books of the Holy Scripture contain the divine revelation made to people through the patriarchs, Moses, the righteous and all the prophets of the Old Testament and then through His Son Himself made man at the fullness of time. By its content, the Holy Scripture is the book of Christian teachings. It was also said that Holy Scripture is "*the Son and Word of God who interpreted Himself in words, in His work of approaching people for their elevation to Him, until His incarnation, resurrection and ascension as a man*"².

Like the two great stages in the history of salvation, before and after Christ, the Holy Scripture is divided into: the Old Testament, from Adam until the coming of the Savior and the New Testament, the full point of the Discovery of God through the coming of the Savior.

The Old Testament was the Bible of Israel which included the Law, the prophets and other books such as the Psalms. This is the Hebrew canon preserved by the synagogue in Palestine. The Jews of Alexandria and the diaspora accepted the Greek translation called the Septuagint, which includes, apart from the Hebrew canon, books called *anaghiñoskomena*, used in church worship.

Saint John Damascene speaks of the existence of 27 books of the Old Testament, because: "*the Hebrew alphabet has twenty-two letters, five of which are doubled, so they make twenty-seven*"³, but the current canon of the Old Testament, recognized by the Jerusalem synod (1672), includes 39 canonical books and 13 *good books to read* - called deuterocanonical by Catholics and apocryphal by Protestants. These are: *Judith, I Ezra, I, II, III Maccabees, Tobit, Ecclesiastes, Wisdom of Solomon, Baruch, Letter of Jeremiah*. According to the current Orthodox teaching, the Old Testament includes 39 canonical books to which are added 10 more books and fragments of non-canonical books, but good to read, being edifying for the soul.

The books of the Old Testament are divided into several categories: the **Pentateuch** (the five books of Moses), the **Torah** or the **Law**, which includes the history of the Jews from Abraham to the death of Moses. According to this division, the books are: *The Creation* or *Genesis* (the history of the creation of the world, the history of Adam and Eve, the era of the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the settlement of the 12 sons of Jacob in Egypt, during the time of Joseph); *The Exodus* (liberation from Egyptian slavery, the Israelites' journey through the desert, the giving of the Decalogue to Moses on Mount Sinai); *Leviticus* (includes the ritual and sacerdotal rules led by those from the tribe of Levi); *Numbers* (census of the people, crossing the desert to the land of promise); *Deuteronomy* - The Second Law (repeats the history of the Decalogue and the giving of other Mosaic laws and rules).

¹ Arhid. Prof. Dr. Ioan Zăgrean, Pr. Prof. Dr. Isodor Todoran, , *Orthodox Dogmatics*, Renaissance Publishing House, VIII edition, Cluj-Napoca, 2007, p. 58.

² Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, vol. I, Publishing House of the Biblical and Missionary Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1978, p. 53.

³ Sfântul Ioan Damaschin, *Dogmatics*, translated by Rev. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Fecioru, ed. III, Scripta Publishing House, Bucharest, 2000, p. 181.

The **historical** books are the following: *Joshua Navi, Judges, Ruth, I and II Samuel, I and II Kings, I and II Chronicles (chronicles), Ezra, Nehemiah, Tobit, Judith, Esther, I and II Maccabees.*

Among the **poetic** books, also called sapiential, are: *Job, Psalms, Parables of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom of Jesus Sirach.*

Prophetic books are: *Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Amos, Micah, Joli, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Lamentations of Jeremiah.*

The Romanian Bible includes books and fragments of **non-canonical** books: *The Book of Baruch, The Epistle of Jeremiah, The Song of the Three Youths, III Ezra, The History of Susanna, The History of the Slaying of the Dragon and the Crushing of Bel, III Maccabees, The Prayer of King Manasseh.*

The New Testament is not only the fulfillment of the Old Testament (Matthew 5, 17-21) but also a new faith, the **Gospel**, the good news, contained in the acts, parables and deeds that God did through Jesus of Nazareth in our midst (Acts 2:22). Although the Savior did not write His Gospel, nor did He ask for His life and message to be written, which circulated orally, the Church recognized the books written about Jesus in the first century as the authentic voice of the Apostles, witnesses chosen and sent by Christ .

Regarding the books of the New Testament, it is known that several lists were preserved, the number of 27 of these books being finalized only in the 4th century. There were reservations about the acceptance of the Apocalypse into the canon, "*the only book of the New Testament never used for liturgical readings*"⁴, but after the 6th century no one showed any doubt about the canonicity of the Apocalypse.

The only ones who contested the presence of some writings in the canon of the New Testament are the Protestants, those who ended up rejecting a series of epistles: *the Epistles to the Hebrews, James, Jude, Apocalypse* due to the fact that they demonstrated the lack of basis of certain points in the Protestant teaching. Such an example can be considered Luther who "*considered some books of the New Testament, which did not suit his doctrine, of lesser value, placing them at the end of the New Testament*"⁵.

The books of the New Testament are the following: *the Holy Gospel according to Matthew; Holy Gospel according to Mark; Holy Gospel according to Luke; Holy Gospel according to John; Acts of the Apostles.* Another group of writings of the New Testament is represented by the epistles of the Holy Apostle Paul and the sobornist epistles: *Romans; I, II Corinthians; Galatians; Ephesians; Philippians; Colossians; I, II Thessalonians; I, II Timothy; Titus; Philemon; Jews; Jacob; I, II Peter; I, II, III John; Judas.* The canon of the New Testament ends with the *Apocalypse* of Saint John the Theologian.

The formation and recognition of the Christian Bible by adding the New Testament to the Bible of Israel, is one of the most important acts of the Holy Spirit in the history of the Church.

⁴ John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, translated by Prof. Conf. Dr. Alexandru I. Stan, Publishing House of the Biblical and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1996, p. 18.

⁵ Pr. Prof. Ioan Constantinescu, *The Study of the New Testament*, Publishing House of the Biblical and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1981, p. 16.

The Relationship between the New and the Old Testament

Both the Old Testament and the New Testament are normative for Christians, since the New Testament has the greatest value because it contains the divine revelation made by our Lord Jesus Christ himself, the Son of God and transmitted by the Holy Apostles. This in no way diminishes the value of the Old Testament, which must be studied and understood only in relation to the New Testament. Blessed Augustine expresses himself most clearly in this sense: "*Novum Testamentum in vetere latet, Vetus in Novo patet*"⁶.

The Old Testament is the history of the preparation of the human race for receiving salvation through Christ, the New Testament proving to be the extension of the Old Testament and both, integral parts of the same divine purpose: salvation. The entire Holy Scripture is a testimony about Jesus Christ, a fact certified by the Savior who says: "*Search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life. And those are the ones that talk about Me*" (Ioan 5, 39).

The Old Testament is the promise, and the New Testament the fulfillment, "The Old Testament is the shadow of things to come, the New Testament, truth and reality . This relationship is very well captured by the Holy Apostle Paul when he writes to the Galatians: "Thus the Law was our guide to Christ, so that we may be led by faith" (Galatians 3, 24).

When Jesus Christ calls the Scriptures of the Old Testament confessions about Himself (John 5, 34), He does not understand only the prophecies, but the entire Holy Scripture. However, a strong proof of the relationship between the Old and the New Testament are the messianic prophecies that were fulfilled in the course of history (the time and place of birth, the place, the worship of the Magi; the killing of infants and the flight into Egypt; the Forerunner of Jesus Christ; the passions; the death and His Resurrection. The fulfillment of the prophecies concerning the person of the Savior proves that the Old Testament has the value of doctrinal testimony and divine authority. The fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies in the person of the Savior proves the harmony and connection between the Old and New Testaments, as well as their truth and historical value.

If, from the strict point of view of divine revelation, we could say without making a mistake that the revelation of the New Testament exceeds that of the Old Testament which was made to the people through the messengers of God chosen from among the people, however, in both it is about the plan of God concerning men, and his holy will and our faith, they are equal in value, because both Testaments reveal to us the will and word of God⁷.

Even if the Old Testament is the guide to Christ (Galatians 3, 24), His attitude towards the Old Law is clear: *Do not think that I have come to destroy the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to destroy, but to fulfill* (Matthew 5, 17).

The Old Testament was for Christ the Redeemer His book of reading and prayer; the source from which he extracted the evidence to convince the listeners of the truth that He is the One about whom it was written and prophesied hundreds of years before. Thus, in the synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus reads from the prophet Isaiah (61, 1) on the way to Emmaus, to Luke and Cleopas, *starting with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them from all the Scriptures about Him* (Luke 24, 27); in the Sermon on the Mount, he quotes from the Old Law

⁶ *The New Testament is hidden in the Old, the Old Testament opens in the New*, Blessed Augustine, apud Pr. Prof. Dr. Isidor Todoran, Archid. Prof. Dr. Ioan Zăgărean, *Op. cit.*, p. 73.

⁷ Pr. Drd. Constantin Duțu, *The importance of the Old Testament as a Source of Preaching*, in *Theological Studies*, year XXX(1978), nr. 1-2 p. 36-37.

(Exodus 20, 14; Deuteronomy 5, 18; Leviticus 19, 12; Leviticus 24, 20), explaining the essential places and showing the superiority of the New Covenant over the Old Law⁸.

When the teacher of the law asks him what he must do to inherit eternal life, Jesus appeals to the knowledge of the Law: *What is written in the Law? How do you read?* (Luke 10, 25). The governor asks him the same question, and Jesus reminds him of the commandments of the Law: *do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not steal, do not testify falsely, honor your father and your mother* (Luke 18, 20).

Regarding faith, both Testaments speak of one God, spiritual (Exodus 33, 20), God creator of heaven and earth. God is one in being (Deuteronomy 6, 4), eternal (Exodus 3, 15), almighty (Job 13, 3), unchanging (Numbers 23, 19), omniscient and omnipresent (Psalm 138, 1-22).

In addition to dogmatic teachings, in the Old Testament we also find moral teachings that correspond to those of the New Testament. Both develop the feeling of brotherhood and love between people. Besides, in the Old Testament as in the New Testament, everything comes down to man's duty to love God and his neighbor, according to the commandments in the Decalogue. All these commandments are sublimely summarized in the New Testament by the words: "love your neighbor as yourself" (Romans 13, 9).

In addition to dogmatic and moral teachings, the Old Testament also contains ceremonial, political, civil and social laws. They were in force as long as the Jews were independent and had a well-organized state life, but with the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem in AD 70, only the dogmatic and moral laws remained in force.

The unity of Holy Scripture is very pronounced, presenting a wonderful example of organic unity in variety. Together, the two Testaments form a unitary, indissoluble, organic whole, which includes the history of salvation, carried out by God to free man from original sin.

The organic unity of the two Testaments can also be seen from the unity of divine Revelation, as the Holy Apostle Paul testifies to the Jews: "After God once, in many times and in many forms, spoke to our fathers through the prophets, in these days more than then he spoke to us through the Son, whom he made heir of all things and through whom he also made the ages" (Hebrews 1, 1-2). Likewise, the connection between the two Testaments also emerges from the "over two hundred quoted texts and the over three thousand allusions from the Old Testament that we find in the New Testament"⁹.

The Old Testament, through its prefigurations, depicts Jesus Christ under the images of future realities and mysteries. Thus the exit from Egypt prefigures the passage of Jesus Christ from this world to His heavenly father (John 13, 1) and the passage of Christians through Baptism from sin to life in Christ. Likewise, the Covenant established on Mount Sinai is the type of the new Covenant, completed by Christ's Sacrifice on the cross. Likewise, a number of personalities such as: Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon and others foreshadowed Jesus Christ through their role. Other people, through humility, suffering, faith and justice, foreshadowed Christ who suffered death on the cross and rose from the dead.

⁸ Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Belu, *The Old Testament as a Homiletic Source*, in the Metropolis of Transylvania, year II (1957), nr. 5-8, p. 506.

⁹ Pr. Prof. Ioan Constantinescu, *Op. cit.*, p. 351.

Conclusions

Viewed as a whole, the two Testaments, inspired by one and the same Spirit of God, abundantly prove that they contain the eternal word of God, the eternal, unchanging and unique truth of His Righteousness, and the unified testimony about the Messiah, both in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament, has eternal and universal significance for us, for all ages and for all Christianity.

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