

THE USE OF THE BIBLE BY MEDIEVAL CARMELITE WRITERS

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Abstraksi :

Sejak zaman Patristik, orang percaya bahwa teks-teks Alkitab mengandung makna yang amat kaya. Orang percaya bahwa teks suci mengandung *makna literal* (makna seperti apa adanya) dan *makna-makna rohani* yang dapat disimpulkan dari makna literal. Sebagai contoh: yang dimaksud dengan kota Yerusalem dalam Alkitab adalah sebuah kota suci di Palestina (makna literal), tetapi juga Gereja Yesus Kristus (makna Kristologis-ekklesiologis) atau jiwa orang beriman (makna moral/ropologis) atau surga (makna anagogis). Meskipun orang yakin bahwa makna literal itu penting dan menjadi dasar untuk makna-makna rohani, namun nyatanya para penulis abad pertengahan begitu mudah menekankan makna rohani. Dalam artikel ini kami memberikan contoh-contoh yang kami ambil dari para penulis Karmelit abad pertengahan yang merupakan anak dari zamannya.

Keywords: bible, literal sense, allegorical sense, Carmelite writers

The aim of this article is twofold: on the one hand, to present a brief and overall picture of the use of the Bible and its interpretation in the Middle Ages, and, on the other hand, to see how Carmelite writers have something in common with their contemporary writers with regard to the use of the Bible. Since the material is so extensive, in this article we have to limit our research to some selected Carmelite writings.

1. The use and the exegesis of the Bible in the Middle Ages¹

The Middle Ages covers a long period of approximately one thousand years (from fifth to fifteenth century C.E.), and as far as the history of biblical exegesis is concerned, it ranges from the end of the period of old patristic exegesis to the times

1 See Robert M. Grant - David Tracy, *A Short History of the Interpretation of The Bible* (London: SCM Press, 19842); Raymond E. Brown, "Hermeneutics," in Raymond E. Brown - Joseph A. Fitzmyer - Roland E. Murphy (ed.), *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1968) II:41; Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale. Les quatre sens de l'Ecriture* (Paris: Aubier, 1959-1964); Jo. Ticheler, *Didyme l'Aveugle et l'exégèse allégorique* [doctoral dissertation] (Nijmegen: Dekker en van de Vegt, 1977).

when theology became a holy science independent from biblical exegesis. However, it is still possible to make a brief outline of the medieval exegesis. As a matter of fact, during those times there was hardly any significant novelty in the interpretation of the Bible. During this period the main characteristics of the patristic and monastic exegesis are maintained faithfully.

In order to describe the medieval exegesis, it is worth citing here the famous couplet concerning the fourfold meaning of the Bible:²

Littera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria,
moralis quod agas, quo tendas anagogia.
(The letter shows us what God and our fathers did;
The allegory shows us where our faith is hid;
The moral meaning gives us rules of daily life;
The anagogy shows us where we end our strife.)

The idea of the four senses of the Bible must be ascribed to patristic origin, namely to John Cassian (died ca. 435) or to other earlier Fathers of the Church (e.g. Clement of Alexandria or Augustine). The formulation of that famous couplet, however, becomes popular due to the quotation of the couplet by Nicholas of Lyra (died 1340). It expresses the medieval opinion that biblical texts have four meanings (1 + 3), that is: *literal* meaning and *spiritual* meaning which in its turn consists of three meanings (allegorical, moral/tropological and anagogical).³

By *literal* sense is meant history (namely certain persons, events or things) of which biblical texts inform us. By *allegorical* meaning is meant the Christological meaning that can be deduced from the literal sense; but as far as the Church belongs to Jesus Christ, then by allegorical sense is also meant Ecclesiological sense. Strictly speaking, this allegorical meaning should be sought only in Old Testament texts, because the *literal sense* of the New Testament texts are already speaking of Christ and/or his Church. By *moral or tropological* sense is meant the morality that can be deduced from the literal sense. It means that a fact/reality told in the Bible is useful as an instruction for the conduct of the Christian. Finally, by *anagogical* meaning is meant the eschatological event as our definitive future that is implied in the literal sense.

The classical and pedagogical description of the four senses of the Bible is the city of Jerusalem. *Literally* interpreted, Jerusalem is the holy city in the Holy Land; *allegorically* it represents the Church; *tropologically* it stands for the human soul and *anagogically* it stands for the heavenly Jerusalem. Another example is given by St. Thomas Aquinas. The “Fiat lux” of Gen 1:3 has the *historical* meaning

2 Cited from Grant - Tracy, *op. cit.*, 85.

3 Concerning the order of “letter - allegory - tropology” or the inverted order “letter - tropology - allegory” and its theological implication, see Alonso Schökel, *Il dinamismo della tradizione* (Brescia: Paideia, 1970) 24 - 30; he summarizes Henri de Lubac’s extensive explanation on this theme.

of the creation of physical light. *Allegorically* it means the birth of Jesus in the Church, *tropologically* it means the enlightenment of the soul by Christ, and *anagogically* it means our entering into eschatological glory through Christ (*In Galatas, cap. v, lect. 7*).

Even though there exists also a variety in the number of the biblical senses — sometimes its number is reduced to 3 or enlarged to 7 in connection with the seven seals or the seven spirits mentioned in the Book of Revelation (5:1 and 1:4 respectively) — the most popular scheme is the fourfold scheme. It becomes also the pattern of some theological treatises, liturgical ceremonies and prayers, homilies, and books classification in quite a few libraries. This fact reveals that the division of biblical meaning into four senses permeates the frame of thinking of medieval Christian society.

The teaching on the four senses of the Bible only shows us that the Bible is regarded as God's Word, written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is therefore very rich in meaning. The Bible is like an unfathomable ocean or a heavenly expanse or an impenetrable forest of divine mysteries. The biblical texts have different colours of meaning like the tail of a peacock. But those multiple and unpredictable meanings of the Bible cannot be found unless through *Lectio Divina*, i.e. through a constant reading and re-reading of the Bible under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in purity of heart and prayer.

Even though it is the medieval conviction that the literal sense has historical importance (= *historia est fundamentum*), we can say that in the medieval exegesis in general, but especially in monastic mysticism and in the pastoral ministry (e.g. in preaching), the spiritual sense gets more attention than the literal sense.⁴ The medieval writers tend to consider the history (facts, things or events) as simple facts, without investigating them critically. Therefore, they think the literal sense is clear enough. Consequently, they quite often pass hastily to the more-than-literal or spiritual senses, especially when the literal sense is difficult to understand.⁵ We must say that the medieval interpretation is often exaggerating in deducing spiritual senses out of the biblical texts.

Of course, there have been some periods when a more serious attention was paid to the literal sense (e.g. to philological aspect). It is worth mentioning the Carolingian revival (8th - 9th century).⁶ In the schools of the Carolingian revival more attention is paid to the study of grammar, rethorics, original languages of the Bible, or other sciences that may help any exegete to understand better the literal meaning of biblical texts. Along with those studies, revisions of the Latin Bible, "introductions" to each book of the Bible, commentaries, and a sort of appendix to the commentaries which is called "*quaestiones et responsiones*" (i.e. theological ques-

4 See Brown, *art. cit.*, n. 41; Grant, *op. cit.*, p. 85; Schökel, *op. cit.*, 26.

5 Schökel, 26.

6 Pierre Riché, "Strumenti di lavoro e metodi dell'esegeta in epoca carolingia," in Pierre Riché, Jean Châtillon - Jacques Verger, *Lo studio della Bibbia nel Medioevo latino* (Brescia: Paideia, 1989) 19-38.

tions that may arise from biblical texts and their rational answers) are composed. In addition to *catena* (=marginal notes on biblical texts taken largely from patristic commentaries), the Carolingian revival introduces the use of glosses (=commenting notes put either in the margin, between the biblical texts or separately from the biblical texts as an appendix). It is interesting to note that the books that attract more commentators are Genesis, the Song of Songs, Psalms, Kings, Matthew and the Pauline letters.⁷

The impetus initiated by the Carolingian revival to seek the literal sense as the basis of other senses continues to exist and becomes stronger and stronger in the twelfth century European schools and universities. This new development in the biblical interpretation is due to the influence of Saint Bernard and most of all of Saint Thomas Aquinas.

Beginning from the 13th century the study of the literal sense of the Bible becomes more and more dominant in schools and in a special way in universities. Two universities are worth mentioning here: Paris and Oxford. More and more university people learn Hebrew and Greek, grammar and dialectic. The editing of the whole Bible and its division into chapters and verses is done during this period; it is surely a great help for writers in making references to the biblical texts. The *verbal* concordance is composed. The analytical and contextual study of the Bible becomes more familiar. Quite a few commentaries on the biblical books (wholly or partially) are written; it seems that the most preferred books to comment on are Genesis, Psalms and the Song of Songs as the Appendix II shows us. All these tools for exegesis reflect the increasing conviction that the literal sense of the Bible is fundamental for the spiritual senses. St Thomas says,⁸

Si può argomentare soltanto partendo dal senso letterale e non dai sensi denominati allegorici ... Nulla della sacra Scrittura andrà, tuttavia, perduto, poiché nulla di necessario alla fede è contenuto nel senso spirituale senza che la Scrittura ce lo comunichi chiaramente altrove nel senso letterale (I^a, q. I, a. 10).

A similar conviction is found in the saying of Albert the Great, “The literal sense is the primary sense wherein lies the basis for the three spiritual senses” (*Summa theologiae* I^a, I, 5, 4) or of Bonaventura, “Who despises the letter of the Scriptures will never get to the spiritual comprehension.” This increasingly stronger appreciation of the literal sense of the Bible results in the decline of spiritual exegesis in universities. But it does not mean that spiritual exegesis is rejected. It is still used besides literal exegesis, especially in homilies. The reason for that is as follows. For most of medieval Christian writers the spiritual sense is not an external addition or adornment to biblical texts or an “adaptation” of biblical texts to the spiritual needs of the Christian life but constitutes an essential element of the biblical meaning. The spiritual senses

7 Riché, *art. cit.*, 33.

8 Cited from Verger, *art. cit.*, 110.

are, using Thomas Aquinas' words, "de necessitate sacrae Scripturae."⁹ Since God is the author of the Bible, it contains unfathomable mysteries that reveal *the unity of the history of salvation*.

It should be noted here that the birth of mendicant orders gave a great contribution to the history of exegesis. The mendicant friars, dedicating themselves to the study of theology and the Bible as preparation for their apostolate, offer to universities famous theologians and exegetes. The mendicant friars, especially the Carmelites during the 14th and 15th century, are more dominant in biblical field than secular priests, as the appendix I shows us.

2. The use of the Bible in the writings of some Carmelite writers

Two preliminary notes should be made here. Firstly, the documents studied here are limited to four documents:

- 1) *Ignea Sagitta* of Nicholas the Frenchman; for the text and its enumeration of the lines we follow Adrianus Staring, Nicolai Prioris Generalis Ordinis Carmelitanum *Ignea Sagitta*" in *Carmelus* (1962) 271-307;
- 2) the writings of John Baconthorpe in A. Staring, *Medieval Carmelite Heritage* (Rome: Institutum Carmelitanum, 1989, 185-253)
- 3) the work of Philip Ribot in E. Boaga, *Nello Spirito e nella virtù di Elia* (Roma: Commissione Internazionale per lo studio del carisma e Spiritualità, 1990, 53-83)
- 4) the Rule.

Secondly, it will not be shown here how biblical allusions correspond to the Vulgate. As a matter of fact, it is always difficult to know whether differences in biblical quotations and allusions are caused by different Vulgate versions used by a writer or by his liberal use of the Bible. It should be noted that, before the so-called *Biblia Sacra Vulgatae Editionis Sixti Quinti Pont. Max. jussu recognita atque edita* was published in 1592 by the command of Pope Clement VIII, there had existed several editions of the Vulgate. Those pre-Clementine Vulgates are often mixed up with reminiscences of the Old Latin text (=Vetus Latina).

1. *Ignea Sagitta*

A. Staring rightly says that the author of *Ignea Sagitta* is a man well-versed in Scriptures.¹⁰ That this work is impregnated with biblical references is revealed by

9 Verger, 104.

10 *Carmelus* (Vol. 9, 1962) 251 ("Optime versatus est in Sacra Scriptura et novit etymologias scientiae biblica temporis"). Cf. also B. Edwards, *Sword* (Vol. XXXIX, No. 2, 1979) 6.

the fact that it has at least 189 biblical allusions. In our judgement the author of *Ignea Sagitta* uses the Bible in the following ways:

1. By quoting (completely or partly) biblical texts, even though sometimes there is a slight difference from the Clementine Vulgate, as the following examples show us:

<p><i>Ignea Sagitta</i> I:2-3</p> <p><i>Quomodo obscuratum est aurum, mutatus est color optimus, dispersi sunt lapides sanctuarii in capite omnium platearum! Heu me, Mater! quae me genuisti, Religio sanctissima, de altitudine excellentis ac eminentis scientiae circumcisionis spiritualis olim merito nuncupata, propter te Propheta lamentatur ...</i></p>	<p><i>Lam</i> 4: 1</p> <p><i>Quomodo obscuratum est aurum, mutatus est color optimus, dispersi sunt lapides sanctuarii in capite omnium platearum!</i></p>
<p><i>Ignea Sagitta</i> I:38-39</p> <p>Unde iterum Propheta propter te lamentatur dicens: “Egressus est a filia Sion omnis decor eius, et principes eius velut arietes non invenerunt pascua”</p>	<p><i>Lam</i> 1: 6</p> <p><i>Et egressus est a filia Sion omnis decor ejus; facti sunt principes ejus velut arietes non invenientes pascua ...</i></p>
<p><i>Ignea Sagitta</i> I: 60</p> <p>Verumtamen, <i>quoniam zelus domus tuae comedit me</i>, hunc statum considerans tuum, Mater mea religiosissima, vehementis tristitiae compellor suspiria emittere lacrimosa.</p>	<p><i>Psalms</i> 68:10</p> <p><i>Quoniam zelus domus tuae comedit me ...</i></p>

2. By borrowing biblical words/terms, mostly *without* taking into consideration their proper context or their original meaning. Some examples can be given here. In *Ignea Sagitta* the Order is compared to Jerusalem; therefore what is said of Jerusalem in the Book of Lamentations is said of the Order. The writer himself says in I: 34, “Agnosce, Mater, agnosce omnia ista de te dicta” (here “omnia ista” refers to the Book of Lamentations). The Order is also compared

to the man who falls into the hands of the robbers on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho (Lk 10:29f.). Or again, the former state of the Order is compared to the good pasture of Ps 22:2 with “the pasture” being interpreted spiritually (II: 20-23). On the other hand, the stepsons of the Order (i.e. those who abandon solitary life and live in cities) are compared to the “princes” of Jerusalem who wander in the trackless wastes (cf. Ps. 106:40) or to the Israelites who dwell among the heathen (referring to Ps. 105:35-36 and Lam 1:3). In the opening greeting (“Omnibus suis concaptivis pauper Nicolaus salutem et Spiritus Sancti consilium permanens in aeternum) the terms *concaptivis* of Rm 16:7 and *concilium* and *in aeternum* of Ps 32:11 are borrowed freely. Then in I: 58-59, “the stone of offense” (*lapides offensionis*) and “stumbling-blocks” (*petrae scandali*) referring to the stepsons of the Order are terms borrowed from Is 8:14 where the two words refer to God. Similarly, “Non sic impii, non sic” of Ps 1:4 is used as a direct address to the stepsons of the Order, whereas in Ps 1:4 the phrase is not an appellation. In some cases, however, the writer borrows biblical words and idioms in their original sense, e.g. I: 28, “pacis vinculo” of Eph 4:3; IV: 28-29 “to clap hand over mouth” of Job 21:5 meaning to be silent out of shame or wonder; etc.

3. By quoting verses (partly) and combining them with other verses so as to make a mosaic of texts: I: 30-33 (Lam 1:8; 1:7; 1:8; 1:2); II: 27-35 (Lam 4:2; 2:14ab and 2:18b-19); II: 39-52 (Lam 1:13; 1:11; 3:45; 1:18; 1:15-16; 1:19; 1:16; 4:14; 2:22 and 4:6).
4. By using biblical texts interpreted spiritually, especially tropologically. E.g. in I: 40 the *pasture* of Lam 1:6 is understood as spiritual consolation. In Ch. VI many biblical figures (Abraham, Moses, Jesus) are mentioned as models for solitary hermits.
5. The most frequently quoted books are Ps (48 times) and Lam (26 times). That Ps is the most frequently cited book is very understandable, since in the past every hermit should know the Psalms by heart. That Lam is second to Ps is understandable as well, because in this work the Order is compared to the fall of Jerusalem spoken in Lam.

From the above data we can conclude that the writer of *Ignea Sagitta* proves to be the son of his times when biblical interpretation is predominantly spiritual; he shows himself very familiar with the Bible to such an extent that the words of the Bible become his own words. That is why it is not easy to distinguish the writer's words from biblical words, unless one is quite familiar with the Vulgate or one makes use of a verbal concordance.

2. Philip Ribot's work

In the selected texts of Ribot as we find them in E. Boaga's *Nello Spirito e nella virtù di Elia* we can find at least 182 biblical references (OT 84 and NT 98). The two books most frequently cited are Psalms and Mt (at least 25 times each). A

closer examination of the way Ribot uses the Bible results in the following conclusions:

1. Compared with *Ignea Sagitta*, Ribot's work makes a good use of biblical texts in a simpler way. There are more *direct quotations* (almost equally from OT and NT) taken in their literal sense. The reason seems to be the fact that Ribot's work aims at describing the ideal of a hermit's life in imitation of Elijah. Therefore Ribot cites biblical texts that in themselves contain spiritual meaning, and accordingly do not need to be interpreted spiritually or tropologically. E.g. ch. IV (on controlling one's own will and carnal desires) is full of biblical texts in their literal sense. Outside such texts, Ribot treats Scriptures with spiritual-tropological interpretation. He often tries to see the *historical* sense but then he prefers the mystical/spiritual sense ("non solum historice, sed potius mystice," Ch. 2). It is interesting to see how he gets to the moral interpretation through the etymology of biblical names or words. From etymological sense he goes further to spiritual sense. E.g. the phrase "contra Iordanem" of 1 Kgs 17:2-4 is interpreted as "against our sins." Why? Because "Iordan" means "descensio" (=descent). From this literal-etymological sense he goes further to say that "Iordan" means sins, because sins are spiritual descent or degrading state of human souls. Then Wadi Carith, which etymologically means separation, is interpreted as charity. The reason for that is Ribot's conviction that only charity (*Caritas*) is a real separation from Jordan, which means sins. Ribot follows the etymological science common in his times. Sometimes Ribot expounds biblical texts in their historical-literal sense (e.g. the story of Elijah and King Achab of 1 Kgs 17-18). In some cases, we can feel the influence of Jewish interpretation of Scriptures, in so far he puts emphasis on the historicity of biblical stories. In his work Ribot deals with biblical stories as if they were all strictly historical facts. Ribot seeks biblical stories to legitimate the existence of the Carmelite Order as Elijah's successors. The basis for that succession is found in Sir 48:8, "Prophetas facis successores post te." John the Baptist is identified with Elijah (see Liber II, ch. 1). Another interesting thing in Ribot's work is the shift from one symbolism to another. In Liber I ch. VIII the ravens are explained allegorically as the prophets, but then the hermits themselves are described as young ravens that should wait until their black feathers grow in order to be fed.

3. John Baconthorpe

a. *Speculum de institutione ordinis*

Even though John Baconthorpe taught Scriptures at a university, his exegesis is very spiritual. He argues that the Order has a very old history, going back to the time of Elijah. His argumentation is as follows. According to Is 35:1-2 ("Datus est ei decor Carmeli") Mount Carmel is given to Mary. So Mary is continually called the owner or mistress (*domina*) of Carmel. Citing biblical texts, Baconthorpe goes fur-

ther to say that many prophets and kings came to honor her. Now since Carmel should not be abandoned to solitude the Order was instituted to continue the devotion to Mary. The biblical texts are taken as proof, overlooking their literal-historical sense. In ch. II he uses typological exegesis, comparing Elijah and Elisha to Jesus.

We can find at least 31 references to OT and 10 to NT. Since Elijah and Elisha are seen as predecessors of the Carmelites, it is understandable that the two books of Kings are the most frequently quoted. Unlike Nicholas the Frenchman and Ribot, Baconthorpe always gives clear reference to the Bible, namely mentioning the chapters of a book. However, he sometimes makes mistakes: e.g. in *Speculum* II: 58 he refers to Is 32 instead of Is 35:4; in lines 66-67 of the same chapter he refers to Jn 29 (which does not exist) instead of Jn 12. Judging from these mistakes and from the inverted order of biblical words we may conclude that Baconthorpe knows the Bible by heart, and seemingly quotes it from memory. In general the biblical quotations in this work are taken in their literal sense: he quotes them as a kind of historical facts.

b. Tractatus Super Regulam

In this treatise Baconthorpe describes Mary as the model of religious life, because she lives up to the three evangelical counsels spoken of in the Rule. There are 2 references to OT and 16 to NT (including the biblical allusions we can find in the Rule cited by Baconthorpe). Generally speaking, his exegesis is predominantly literal. The biblical texts speak of morality and, since the Rule is a “moral/tropological” text, Baconthorpe did not need to make spiritual exegesis out of non-spiritual texts.

c. Compendium historiarum et iurium ...

In this work there are very few references to the Bible: only 3 to OT and 1 to NT (not counting the biblical references that are taken from Peter Comestor’s *Historia scholastica*). The first biblical quotation is from Is 35:2 (“Gloria Libani data est ei, decor Carmeli et Saron”); this verse is considered as the basis for the belief that Mary is the owner of Mount Carmel (line 5-6). All the other references are given as historical facts to legitimate the history of the Order.

d. Laus religionis Carmelitanae

In Book I, ch. III the fertility and excellent quality of Carmel is compared to Mary’s superiority over other human beings. Song 2:2 is interpreted as spoken by Jesus to Mary (Liber I, Cap. III: 35-36 which reads, “Unde de ipsa dicit Christus: ‘Sicut lilium inter spinas, sic amica mea inter filias’”). She is (using the words of

Psalm 67:17) a mount “in quo beneplacitum est Deo habitare in eo” (Liber I, Cap. III: 37-38). Baconthorpe even cites Is 10:18 and interprets it as speaking about Mary. In fact, the verse in its original context has nothing to do with Mount Carmel in Holy Land. There the Hebrew word *karmillo* should be translated “his plantation” or “his fruitful land” (Vulgate: *carmeli ejus*). Is 10:18 is a curse to Assyrian land and plantation (= *karmel*). Thus, by playing on the words Baconthorpe uses spiritual exegesis. Biblical allusions are often borrowed to justify every honour or attribute given to Mary, even though originally those texts have nothing to do with Mary. The same can be said of the other books (Liber II - VI). In our judgement, Baconthorpe makes good use of the Bible; he is familiar with the Bible. He rarely quotes the texts in their literal-historical sense. But he very often uses spiritual exegesis.

4. The Rule

The Rule itself urges the Carmelites to be continually occupied with the Word of God, “die ac nocte in lege Domini meditantes” (par. 7; cf. par. 4 etc.). It is logical that for the composer of the Rule himself the prayerful reading of the Bible in *Lectio Divina* plays an important role in his life. So it is not surprising then that the Rule is so impregnated with biblical terms and themes.¹¹ These are only two examples:

1. “Albertus, Dei gratia Ierosolomitane Ecclesie vocatus patriarcha, dilectis in Christo filiis B ... in Domino salutem et Sancti Spiritus benedictionem” (of Prologue) must be inspired by the introductory greetings in the Pauline letters in terms of *its structure* (name of sender - his status through God’s grace - the beloved addressee - benediction) and *its wording* (*vocatus, Domino, in Christo*). Cf. the greeting in Rm 1:1; Eph 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1.
- Par. 14 of the Rule is a mosaic of biblical texts (OT and NT):
 “Accingendi sunt (cf. Ex 12:11) *lumbi* (Eph 5:14) *cingulo* (cf. Is 11:5) castitatis.”
 “*Gladius autem Spiritus, quod est verbum Dei* (Eph 5:17) *abundanter habitat* (cf. Col 3:16) *in ore et in cordibus vestris* (cf. Dt 30:14). *Et quaecumque vobis agenda sunt* (cf. 1 Cor 10:31; 1 Pe 4:11), *in verbo Domini fiant.*”

In some cases the composer of the Rule just borrows biblical words, e.g. *oratorium ... in medio* (par. 10 - cf. Ez 48:8); “*vita hominis super terram*” (par. 14 - cf. Job 7:1). But in most cases biblical texts are used as the composer’s own words in their literal sense. This is understandable since the Rule is meant to give a set of rules for the hermits’ life. Therefore, biblical texts that contain moral teachings can be taken in their literal sense and be quoted as support for the commands and exhortations given by the Rule. Taking into consideration the above observations, we can conclude that the composer of the Rule is a man of God’s Word. He is so familiar with God’s Word to such an extent that the biblical phrasing and ideas become his own. Accordingly, biblical terms, words and themes become his own and he can refer continually to them, quote them from memory and adapt them slightly to his own needs.

3. General conclusions

The above study of the use of the Bible in some Carmelite documents show the following characteristics:

- (1) The writers/composers of those documents are men of God's Word. Lectio Divina must play central role in their spiritual life, so that their familiarity with the Scriptures is amazing.
- (2) They often borrow biblical words as their own without informing their readers.
- (3) They are sons of their times: their biblical interpretation is predominantly spiritual (moral, topological) without paying too much attention to the literal sense of the texts they quote or use. In some cases, the Carmelite writers treat the biblical stories as historical facts in the strict sense of the word.

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