

... *But I say unto you* ... the Gospel of contrasts and counterpoints

Among other objections and questionings, Jesus said several times: ... ***But I say unto you*** whenever He was teaching his own principles and commandments, which were in stark contrast to the Old Testament's law practiced by the Jews, as we read in Matthew 5: 22, 28, 32, 34, 39 and 44.

By using the word "**BUT**", Jesus pointed out that he did not agree with the essence of the law practiced by the Jews. Indeed, throughout his ministry in this world, Jesus made a complete reappraisal and revision of the commandments given by Moses at Sinai.

As we see on many occasions described in the biblical accounts, the Gospel preached by Jesus Christ was radically opposed to the Old Testament message, since Jesus contested several principles of the Mosaic law, with which he disagreed.

With a new and revolutionary perspective, Jesus threw away the paradigms of the superficial religion practiced by his Jewish contemporaries and broke down the logic of the relentless law of Moses. For this reason, it is written in John 1:17 ... *Because the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ*. In this text, it is clear that the truth did not come with the Old Testament law, but with the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Thus, because the truth came only through Jesus Christ, everything else that has been taught since the Old Testament is not worthy of credit. Indeed, Jesus brought truth and light on everything that was obscure and misinterpreted in the past.

Jesus changed everything precisely because everything needed to be changed. He did not come just to carry out the plan begun in Genesis, which extended throughout the history of the Jewish people, passing through the pilgrimage in the desert, the period of the judges, kings, prophets and the exiles.

Because of this need to change what was obsolete and innocuous, Jesus came to make all things new, both in heaven and earth (Colossians 1:20). He came exactly to interfere radically in the history of mankind, in order to correct and rewrite a plan that was doomed to failure. For this reason, Jesus is the Mediator of a New Testament, as we read in Hebrew 9:15.

Among other surprising news and teachings, Jesus brought up the concepts of new birth, new circumcision, new Sabbath, new living sacrifice, as well as new commandments, which required the fulfillment of forgiveness and love even to enemies, and these practices were totally unknown in the Old Testament.

Strictly speaking, the moral principles that governed the Old Testament laws and commandments were a total disaster. By saying "*I give you a new commandment*" (John 13:34), Jesus established a new, much higher ethical and moral standard, which the Jews never knew in the commandments of Moses.

Another proof that Jesus had exclusive and personalized commandments is the fact that He said in John 14:15, "*If you love me, keep my commands*". Therefore, the evidence of someone loving Christ is not keeping the law of Moses, but the commandments of Jesus Christ.

The teachings of Jesus caused admiration because they were totally different from the religiosity of liturgies and appearances which the Jews had in the law and the prophets of the Old Testament (Mark 1:22 and 27).

The disciples of Jesus were impregnated with that outward religion that prevailed in the Jewish culture, and in this way they remained throughout the three years of the discipleship, and because of this, they had to be detoxified from the old commandments and principles, which contrasted greatly with the teachings of their Master.

Making an analogy with the computational language, Jesus' disciples had to be “reset” and “reconfigured”, for their minds were dull and filled with the innocuous religiousness of the Old Testament.

Even after an intense “training stage” with the Master, the disciples remained intoxicated with jealousy, arrogance, lack of faith, immaturity and ignorance about the Kingdom of God. They all supposed that Jesus would forcibly take earthly power, as the Messiah which was prophesied in the Old Testament.

Because of those contrasts and paradoxes, the Gospel taught by Jesus became a counterpoint to all that his disciples learned from their Jewish background, and this is very evident at the end of Jesus' ministry, since his disciples still disputed privileged positions in the future kingdom.

They even requested authorization from the Master for fire to come from heaven, in order to consume the Samaritans, as Elijah did with the prophets of Baal, what demonstrates they did not understand anything about the true principles from the kingdom of God.

Differently from the message of Jesus in his Gospel, the Old Testament's message had only produced people with arrogance, racial prejudice, misogyny, zeal for outward religious precepts, and predisposed to revenge.

Even Peter, one of Jesus' greatest disciples, came to the end of the Master's ministry without understanding the essence of the Gospel, because he had his mind impregnated with the Old Testament laws and teachings, not understanding that the true Messiah would come with a message of peace and reconciliation, and not with a political and warlike way by physical force.

Even after the amazing experience of Pentecost, Peter still ignored the universal attribute of Jesus Gospel, imagining that God's plan was restricted to the Jews, for this was what he learned since his youth when he still was in Judaism. Only after the miraculous sight of the sheet with unclean animals (Acts 10) did Peter come to understand God's plan in a better way.

Nicodemus was one of the leading religious leaders in Israel and certainly was zealous in fulfilling all the precepts of the Torah. However, Jesus told him that he would have to be born again to know the kingdom of God (John 3: 1-12).

In this way, Jesus was telling Nicodemus that he needed to reorganize his life according to the model of the true Kingdom of God, through the principles and commandments that Jesus was teaching him.

The Bible does not report the end of history, whether Nicodemus truly converted or not, but if he did not abandon the religion of appearances based on Jewish ritualism, he certainly did not experience the new birth that Jesus quoted.

The new birth was something so strange and unknown in Jewish religious culture based in the Old Testament that the religious leader Nicodemus failed to understand absolutely anything about the spiritual meaning to which Jesus referred.

On another occasion, Jesus contradicted the Old Testament law by not stoning an adulteress in John 8: 1-11, as the law prescribed this type of punishment for adultery. Jesus had no sin and this fact would enable him to stone the woman, but He did not act that way, for He brought a new concept of forgiveness and restoration of life.

Thus, Jesus not only brought with him a new “interpretation” of the Old Testament' law but he also conveyed his own principles and commandments, which were often contrary in essence to the commandments of the Torah.

Furthermore, Jesus revolutionized the obsolete form of worshiping from Old Testament, which was merely an exterior liturgy. He taught his own commandments based on moral and ethics principles, without the traces of

xenophobia, racism, or sexism against women and physical born disabled people, which were very typical in the Mosaic Law. Thus, Jesus included those who lived excluded and hopeless.

In his ministry on earth, Jesus dedicated special attention to those people who were excluded from the Jewish aristocracy. For this reason, everybody became surprised on seeing him close to tax collectors, prostitutes, lepers, foreigners, and others which were discriminated by the Jewish religious authorities (Matthew 7: 28-29).

Jesus was accused of being friend and accomplice of sinners (Matthew 11:19), but He responded to the accusations by saying that publicans and prostitutes were closer to the kingdom of God than the Pharisees (Matthew 21:31).

In general terms, we can say that the Gospel of Jesus was not only a counterpoint to the rules and commandments of the Old Testament, but also became a stumbling block for all those who were based on the principles and rules of the mosaic law, as if they wanted to be justified forcibly by such law (Matthew 21: 42-44).

In fact, the Old Testament law was nailed to the cross by the death of Jesus (Colossians 2:14-16) and anyone looking to be justified by the Law of Moses fell from the grace (Galatians 5:4).

The old law is represented by the *“legal demands”*, imposed by the rulers and authorities mentioned in Colossians 2: 14-16, which were disarmed after the victory of Christ in his resurrection ... *by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.*

Jewish religious fanatics highly valued rigor in the blind observance of Old Testament law, but Jesus valued more what was in people's hearts. Because of this, He considered the simplicity and modesty of children more important in the Kingdom of God than the fanatical obedience of the Pharisees to the commandments of the law of Moses.

In this regard, He said that the kingdom of heaven is made up of pure and simple people like children (Matthew 18: 2-3), to whom God revealed himself graciously because of his simplicity. Jesus said in Matthew 11:25 ... *I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.*

Speaking of this kind of wisdom that was given to the simple and pure, Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:21 ... *For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.*

This is further proof that the gospel of Jesus is a tremendous counterpoint and an antithesis to all the theological framework of the Old Testament.

Likewise as the Gospel of Jesus sets against the obsolete framework of the Old Testament, it also opposes to all liturgical religions that exist throughout the world, in which many external rituals are practiced without any meaning in the goal of perfecting the character and moral conduct of their followers.

What is the use of the Old Testament nowadays?

Old Testament events and rules contrast radically as antitheses to the New Testament. This contrast looks like the brightness of the stars, which is more visible the darker the night.

The things that happened in the Old Testament were done to us by antitheses, that is, as inverse metaphors, so that we were not based on what is shadow, but on what is reality (Colossians 2:17, Hebrews 8: 5, 9:24) .

Regarding this novelty and the change of nature, Paul mentioned in 2 Corinthians 5:17 ... *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.*

As he said that *"all things have become new"*, we can extrapolate that the circumcision in the foreskin of the males from the old Law has been replaced by the circumcision of the heart; the liturgical repose on the Sabbath from the old Law was replaced by the repose of the soul in Christ; the commandments of the old Law which were written on tablets of stone had been replaced by commandments written on tablets of meat in the hearts; and so on.

The Old Testament's Law and ethical-moral principles were an antithesis, that is, a counterpoint to all that was taught in the New Testament. This is why commandments such as: *"Thou shalt not kill"* from the Law of Moses have been replaced by: *"Thou shalt love thy enemy"* from the law of Jesus Christ, which is much more noble and significant to fulfill.

Thus, Jesus not only brought with him a new *"interpretation"* of the Old Testament law, but also passed on his own principles and commandments, which were often essentially counterpointed to the Torah commandments.

Therefore, the merit of those archaic Old Testament rules is their reverse sense, insofar as they highlight the greatness and magnitude of the principles taught by Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

This does not mean that the text of the Old Testament books is false in the sense that it was manipulated or adulterated. On the contrary, the veracity of the Torah text and other books of the Old Testament is attested by the fact that bloodthirsty violence, grotesque ritualism, hereditary curse, xenophobia, misogyny, racial prejudice and religious sectarianism were not hidden in the pages of those 39 books, which reveals their transparency and impartiality.

What has really happened throughout history is that the Old Testament's bad examples of genocide, violence and intolerance have been used as pretexts of great injustices and hostile behavior by "Christians", such as the Crusades, the Inquisition, hostility against peoples Arabs, religious or gender intolerance, and many others.

What served more as a pretext and inspiration for the Crusades than the genocides of Midianites, Moabites, Philistines, Amorites, Egyptians and Canaanites, which often occurred in the Old Testament?

What served as a pretext and inspiration for the Inquisition? The religious intolerance demonstrated in the Old Testament with the extermination of the prophets of Baal, or the rebuke of Jesus to his disciples who wanted to bring fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans, as did Elijah with the prophets of Baal?

The bad examples of the Old Testament are similar to the bad teachings of the Koran, which says that a special paradise awaits after death those who have given their lives for Allah in the combat of Jihad, the *"holy war"*.

This irresponsible and malign promise partly explains the success of radical recruitment by the Islamic State (*ISIS*) in the most fundamentalist circles of the Muslim world, since one of the rewards is the awarding of 72 virgin women to men.

There is a similarity of that promise of the Koran with Numbers 31: 9-12 and 35 ... *They captured the women and children of the Midianites, and took as spoils of war all their livestock, flocks and goods ... and thirty-two thousand women who had never had sex.*

In Deuteronomy 20:14 there is the explanation of this abominable criminal practice ... *Only the women and children, and the animals, and everything in the city, all their spoils will be taken for you; and you shall eat of the spoil of your enemies, which Jehovah your God gave you.*

Does that have something to do with the principles and examples given by Jesus in his Gospel in the New Testament? Certainly not, as they seem more to be two opposite poles.

Some people claim that the Old Testament is the basis or some kind of foundation for the New Testament. However, I disagree with this statement because grotesque religious ritualism can never be foundations for something good.

How could the permission for revenge, the execution of genocides, racial prejudice, misogyny, the hereditary curse, the segregation of those with congenital defects and other bizarre things, be foundations for the Gospel of Jesus or for the principles morals of the New Testament?

A foundation is something necessary to sustain, give support and stability for something. In this sense, the ethical and moral principles that we see in the pages of the Old Testament are not positive examples for anything beneficial, and that is why they differ so much from what we see in the New Testament, especially in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Anyway, if the Torah were the ground basis for something beneficial, Jesus would not question the absurd Old Testament law by saying: *You heard what was said to the ancients, **but I say unto you**...* as He did many times.

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