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Old Testament Lessons in the *Säc atat* ('Hours') of Giyorgis Säglawi*

HABTEMICHAEL KIDANE, Ashburn, VA

Introduction

Anyone familiar with the Liturgy of the Word of the *Qəddase* (Eucharistic celebration) and with the recitation of the Yaredian Divine Office knows that the Old Testament is not read during these ceremonies. Nevertheless, the Old Testament is read during the hours of the *Säc atat* ('Hours'). This article explores to what extent the Orthodox *Täwähädo* churches have included the Old Testament in the *Säc atat* composed by Giyorgis Säglawi in the fifteenth century. In this article I will analyse how the Old Testament readings became the main element in almost each hour of the *Säc atat*. Both Giyorgis Säglawi and Zär'a Ya'qob (among other Fathers) had always highlighted the importance of the whole Bible in Christian life and in the liturgy. What we see in the *Säc atat*, in which a large place is given to the Old Testament readings, is the result of the committed activity of these religious leaders to teach the importance of the whole Bible in the Church.

This analysis will focus on the *Säc atat* of Giyorgis currently in use, disregarding other known types of *Säc atat*, since they are unlikely to be currently in use, and their existence is known only through manuscripts. It is no secret that the *Säc atat* of Giyorgis at first met with adversity in many monasteries and churches, and that many clergy refused to accept it. As a result, many monasteries started to compose their own *Säc atat*, reflecting their own spirituality, their monastic tradition, and theological views.¹

Having examined a number of the manuscripts containing the *Säc atat* attributed to Giyorgis Säglawi, we can point out two types, the *Major* and the *Minor Säc atat*:

* I would like to dedicate this article to the *Liqä liqawənt* Getatchew Haile in appreciation of his life's dedication to Gə'əz religious literature. The article is a revised version of a paper presented at the Second International Conference on Ethiopian Texts at the Capuchin Franciscan Research and Retreat Center, Addis Abäba, on 3–5 February 2016.

¹ Getatchew Haile 1982, 70–71.

1) The *Major Säc atāt*,² so called because they give the full structure of each hour of the day (twenty-four-hour recitation) which comprises introductory prayers, *mästäbq^w äc at* (intercessions), Old and New Testament lessons, some psalms, Old and New Testament canticles (intercalated with a response and concluded with a doxology), various hymns (*mäzmurat*) and responses, ‘Ter-sanctus’ (mostly preceded by a psalm or canticle to be recited entirely, and concluded by a doxology), *Šälotä kidan* (‘Prayers of *Testamentum*’),³ the ‘Prayer of blessing’, the Credo, and so on.

2) The *Minor Säc atāt* with a reduced structure compared to the previous one and recited in the traditional hours, namely (a) the two ‘Major Hours’: (i) ‘Morning Prayer’ (ጸሎተ ፡ ነግሀ), and (ii) ‘Vespers’ (ጸሎተ ፡ ሠርክ); (b) the ‘Minor Hours’: (i) ‘Terce’ (፫ ሰዓት), (ii) ‘Sext’ (፮ ሰዓት), (iii) ‘None’ (፱ ሰዓት); (c) and the night prayers: (i) ‘Compline’ (ጸሎተ ፡ ንዋም), and (ii) ‘Night Prayer’ (ጸሎት ፡ ዘሌሊት). None of the numerous manuscript witnesses of the *Minor Säc atāt* predates the sixteenth century. The printed text that the Church has accepted and uses in many parishes and monasteries seems to be based on the *Minor Säc atāt*.

While the *Minor Säc atāt*, according to scholars, seems to have been composed for monks and clergy committed to pastoral activities and manual work, the *Major Säc atāt* was probably composed to suit the exigencies of monasteries where prayers are recited night and day, and where groups of monks take turns in performing the prayer of the Hours without interruption. To the senior monks is assigned the responsibility of performing the hourly prayer communally (*bämaḥbär*), while other monks undertake manual work for the monastery. Some scholars believe that the *Major Säc atāt* is an evolution of the *Minor*, although the latter is witnessed by later manuscripts.

1 Ancient Manuscript Witnesses of the *Major Säc atāt* of Giyorgis

Our study cannot be based solely on the printed books of the *Säc atāt* that the Orthodox *Täwäḥädo* churches use for liturgical celebrations. These are rather arbitrarily abbreviated, so, unfortunately, they can be of no great help in our study. In contrast, the following manuscripts are of paramount importance, and they are the basis of my research into the *Säc atāt*:

² The *Major Säc atāt* is transmitted through a very few very ancient manuscripts such as Gasäčča, Gasäčča Abba Giyorgis, library of the monastery, uncatalogued (= SG), no. 1; SG no. 2; SG no. 3; Collegeville, MN, Hill Museum & Manuscript Library, Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library (= EMLL), 4493; and EMLL 204.

³ For the *Kidan* see Pérès 2011, 255–268 and the bibliography referred there.

1) EMLL 204, second half of the twentieth century, but copied from an earlier (fifteenth-century) manuscript,⁴ as attested in the colophon.⁵ In the opinion of Getatchew Haile, the codex ‘EMML 204 is a direct copy of the original *Māṣḥafā sāʿatat* of the author, which is still preserved in Gasəṣṣa.’⁶

2) EMLL 4493, sixteenth century. Getatchew Haile gives a detailed description and analysis of the content of this manuscript in which all references of the Old and New Testament readings are given for each hour of the *Sāʿatat*.⁷

My work is also based on the reproduction of other equally important manuscripts. They all belong to the library of the monastery of Gasəṣṣa.⁸ Possibly, there is a unique prototype from which they were all copied, in a different time and by a different hand. These manuscripts have not yet been either catalogued or described, and I refer to them here using abbreviations.

1.1 MS SG no. 1: *Sāʿatat* of the Monastery of Gasəṣṣa (Fifteenth Century)

Two incomplete attempts were made to photograph MS SG no. 1, an important and ancient manuscript of the monastery of Gasəṣṣa, ‘identified by the monks as the personal work of Giyorgis (ms. Gasəṣṣa 18)’.⁹ The first attempt was made in 1993 by a team of French scholars during their fieldwork in the monastery of Gasəṣṣa. The team was led by Bertrand Hirsch together with Marie-Laure Derat and Hervé Pennec. They managed to photograph only a few folia of the codex, but identified its title (*Māṣḥafā sāʿatat*), its format (22.5 × 20.5 cm), and its provenance, the monastery of Gasəṣṣa. In 2014, after more than two decades, a team of scholars led by Anaïs Wion (Centre français des études éthiopiennes, Addis Abāba; Centre national de la recherche scientifique, Paris) together with Shiferaw Bekele (Addis Ababa University) and

⁴ For a brief description of the manuscript, see Macomber 1975, 215.

⁵ EMLL 204, fol. 144v. See also Getatchew Haile 2015, 78.

⁶ Getatchew Haile 1981, 339.

⁷ Getatchew Haile 1993, 181–187. Other important manuscripts of the *Sāʿatat* should be mentioned here: EMLL 2702 (eighteenth century) in Getatchew Haile and Macomber 1983, 87–98; EMLL 3049 (eighteenth century) in Getatchew Haile 1985, 35–44; Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. et. 148 (eighteenth century) in Grébaud and Tisserant 1935, 571–574.

⁸ I use the abbreviation ‘SG’ (= *Sāʿatat* of Gasəṣṣa) for the manuscripts referred to here because all of them belong to the library of the monastery of Gasəṣṣa, where Giyorgis lived for many years, and because they are ascribed to him.

⁹ ‘Sāʿatat: Māṣḥafā sāʿatat’, *EAE*, V (2014), 501a–503a (U. Zanetti and E. Fritsch), here 501a.

Deresse Ayenatchew (Debre Berhan University), both from Ethiopia, tried again to photograph this important manuscript. They photographed half of the *Mäṣḥafä säʿatat*; however, under pressure of the monks, they were not able to photograph the remaining half systematically. Nevertheless, they made more photographs than the team led by Bertrand Hirsch and, as a result of their work, we know that the codex comprises about sixty folia.¹⁰

1.2 MS SG no. 2: *Säʿatat* of the Monastery of Gasəčča (Late Fifteenth/Early Sixteenth Century)

With her partners, Wion was able to photograph another important manuscript belonging to the monastery of Gasəčča. Unfortunately, MS SG no. 2 cannot be a big help in our research, since a large part of it is illegible and many folia are missing or have been misplaced. Here and there, folia that do not belong to MS SG no. 2 have been inserted. Comparing this manuscript with the others, one sees that it has many elements in common with the other manuscripts that witness the *Major Säʿatat*.

1.3 MS SG no. 3: *Säʿatat* of the Monastery of Gasəčča (Nineteenth/Twentieth Century)

MS SG no. 3 is another uncatalogued manuscript from the monastery of Gasəčča. I was able to work on photographs of MS SG no. 3 commissioned by Emmanuel Fritsch, to whom I am immensely grateful. This manuscript, photographed in 2010, comprises 100 folia in two columns with twenty-six lines each. The reading is very easy because it is in a good state of conservation. It is also well written. However, throughout the codex, many folia of this manuscript are dirty, especially on the lower margins. The prayers, hymns, and biblical readings contained in this manuscript are identical to the aforementioned manuscripts SG no. 1, EMLL 4493, SG no. 2, and EMLL 204. Since manuscripts from the monastery of Gasəčča have the most extensive and best-preserved *Säʿatat*, they seem to offer a solid basis for a critical edition of the *Säʿatat* of Giyorgis Säglawi.

¹⁰ I am grateful to Bertrand Hirsch, Marie-Laure Derat, and Anaïs Wion for providing a reproduction of this manuscript and for their useful information regarding their fieldwork at the monastery of Gasəčča which took place in 1993 and in 2014 respectively.

1.4 MS SG no. 4: *Sä'atat* of the Monastery of Gasəčča (Twentieth Century)

Another uncatalogued manuscript containing a different type of *Sä'atat* is designated here as MS SG no. 4 (twentieth century), again from the monastery of Gasəčča. It gives the structure of the office for each hour of the day and night, which is a typical feature of the *Major Sä'atat*. The copy of this photographed manuscript, in my possession thanks to Emmanuel Fritsch, starts with the following incipit: 'እጽሐፍ፡ እንከ፡ ዘንተ፡ መጽሐፈ፡ ዘይሰመይ፡ መጽሐፈ፡ ብርሃን፡ ዘደረሰ፡ ጊዮርጊስ፡ ካህን፡ #', 'I transcribe, therefore, this book called *Book of Light* that Giyorgis, the priest, composed'.¹¹ However, what the cited incipit says about its presumed author, namely Giyorgis, and its title, *Mäšhafä bərhan* ('Book of light') is not so easy to confirm. MS SG no. 4 is very similar to the MS Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Raineri 251 (nineteenth century), of which Osvaldo Raineri published a partial Italian version.¹² However, the incipit of MS Raineri 251 quoted by Raineri ('ሃቲ፡ መጽሐፈ፡ ብርሃን፡ [...] ለካዕኩ፡ አነ፡ ጊዮርጊስ፡ ወልደ፡ ሕዝበ፡ ጽዮን፡ ቀሲስ፡', 'I, Giyorgis, son of Həzbä Şəyon, priest [...] authored this *Book of Light*')¹³ does not actually prove what Raineri proposes, that is, that Giyorgis is the author, and that *Mäšhafä bərhan* is the title of the manuscript, for the simple fact that the quote is found in other manuscript witnesses of the *Sä'atat* with a different structure and content.¹⁴

Beyond a few fixed elements, such as the opening and final prayers that seem to relate to the traditional *Sä'atat* of *Abba* Giyorgis, the MS SG no. 4 is not a *Sä'atat* composed by Giyorgis, as some may have thought.¹⁵ The prayers in MS SG no. 4 are completely different from those found in the *Major Sä'atat* of Giyorgis.

The great efforts made by scholars trying to reveal the richness of the spiritual heritage are always a big help for researchers, even if, in some of these manuscripts, there are folia missing, or if parts of these manuscripts are damaged, making reading difficult. From the photographic reproduction, we can say that SG no. 1, EMMML 4493, SG no. 2, SG no. 3, and EMMML 204 were probably all copied from the same manuscript, and that they are close to the original. The slight differences are only orthographic,

¹¹ SG no. 4, fol. 1r; translation my own.

¹² Raineri 2014, 89–134.

¹³ MS SG no. 4, fol. 1r. Translation my own.

¹⁴ Compare EMMML 204, fol. 38v.

¹⁵ None of the manuscripts of *Sä'atat* mentioned by Raineri (Raineri 2014, 88, n. 9) have any similarity to the manuscript he translated.

or involve the addition of short invocations. I suggest that MS SG no. 1 is the oldest, and that it may be the nearest manuscript to the original *Sä'atat* known to scholars. However, it is not easy to confirm whether the manuscript examined by Professor Tadesse Tamrat (d.2013) half a century ago (in 1959 EC = 1966/1967 CE), a fifteenth-century manuscript of Giyorgis's *Sä'atat* brought from the monastery of Gasəčča,¹⁶ is the same one from which EMMML 204 was copied for the Mənilək II Mausoleum (d.1913) in Addis Abäba. The colophon of EMMML 204 claims that the manuscript was copied from an ancient codex 'authored and copied' by Giyorgis Säglawi:¹⁷

This book of Horologium of the night and day (hours) was copied in the eighth year since His Beatitude and Holiness Abunä Baslyos became Patriarch, and the thirty-sixth year since His Majesty Haile Sellassie I became Emperor (that is,) in 1959 Year of Mercy [1966/7AD], (from) an ancient book that Abba Giyorgis authored and copied in his own hand. The honourable *liqä liqawənt* Ḥaylä Mäsqäl Gäbrä Mädḥən had the book brought from the Monastery of Gasəčča of Abba Giyorgis so that it may be used in the service at the Memorial Church of Menelik II.¹⁸

2 The Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Hours

The biblical readings of the Liturgy of the Word in the *Qəddase*, and in the Liturgy of the Hours (*maḥlet*) of the *Dəgg^wa*, as attested by the *Mäṣḥafä gəṣṣawe* (Lectionary),¹⁹ and as handed down by the Orthodox *Täwəḥədo* churches, are made up of four New Testament readings only. There is no

¹⁶ Tadesse Tamrat 1972, 223, n. 4.

¹⁷ The Amharic text of the colophon reads as follows: 'ይህ ፡ የሌሊትና ፡ የመዓልት ፡ መጽሐፈ ፡ ሰአታት ፡ ለዳግማዊ ፡ ምኒልክ ፡ መታሰቢያ ፡ ቤት ፡ ማገልገያ ፡ ይሆን ፡ ዘንድ ፡ ክቡር ፡ ሊቀ ፡ ሊቃውንት ፡ ኃይለ ፡ መስቀል ፡ ገብረ ፡ መድኅን ፡ አባ ፡ ጊዮርጊስ ፡ የደረሱትንና ፡ በእጃቸው ፡ የጻፉትን ፡ ጥንታዊ ፡ መጽሐፍ ፡ ከጋሰጫ ፡ አባ ፡ ጊዮርጊስ ፡ ገዳም ፡ አስመጥተው ፡ ብፁዕ ፡ ወቅዱስ ፡ አቡነ ፡ ባስልዮስ ፡ የኢትዮጵያ ፡ ፓትረያርክ ፡ በሆኑ ፡ በጄኛው ፡ ዓመት ፡ ግርማዊ ፡ ቀዳማዊ ፡ ኃይለ ፡ ሥላሴ ፡ ንጉሠ ፡ ነገሥት ፡ በሆኑ ፡ በ፴፯ተኛው ፡ ዓመት ፡ ፲፱፻፶፱ ዓ ፡ ም ፡ ተጻፈ ።' (EMML 204, fol. 144v).

¹⁸ Getatchew Haile 2015, 78.

¹⁹ The *Mäṣḥafä gəṣṣawe* (Lectionary) is an important liturgical book that gives the most important elements of the *Dəgg^wa* for Sunday, the readings for the Liturgy of the Word, and the anaphora of the day according to the liturgical season and the feasts of the day (Fritsch 2001, 37–54).

doubt that this follows the Coptic system of the Liturgy of the Word.²⁰ The second part of the biblical readings of the *Sä^catat* follows the structure of the *Mäšhafä gəššawē*. The latter, in fact, retaining the traditional structure of four New Testament readings, gives (1) a reading from the Pauline Epistles; (2) the readings from the Catholic Epistles (James, Peter, John, and Jude), also called *Haŋwarya* ('Apostle'); (3) a reading from the Acts of the Apostles; and (4) the Gospel.²¹ The structure of the four New Testament readings of the *Mäšhafä gəššawē* is much older than what is found in the *Sä^catat* and than what is taught by the *liqawənt* (doctors, teachers)²² in the traditional commentary school, where the Old Testament is also taught. In the period of the composition of the *Sä^catat*, possibly even before that, it appears that there was a particular predilection for the Old Testament, not only in religious teaching, but also in some religious services and in gatherings of the faithful. In fact, from that time on, the tradition of reading solely from the New Testament in the Eucharistic Liturgy of the Word and in the *maḥlet* ended. In almost every hour of the *Major Sä^catat*, one finds readings from the New Testament, as well as one or more readings taken from the Old Testament. Needless to say, the majority of the Old and New Testament readings are always strictly related to the two Sabbaths and to the particular hour in which the *Sä^catat* is celebrated. In fact, it is safe to say that the guiding principle for the selection of the readings from the Old and New Testaments, the use of psalms in the *Sä^catat zämä^calt* (diurnal service) and *Sä^catat zälelit* (nocturnal service), is the principle of balance. The readings for the hours of Saturday and Sunday, for example, are chosen thematically with particular use of biblical texts that mention what has been accomplished in those two days.

2.1 *Məsbak*: Announcement of the Gospel

During any liturgical celebration, the Gospel reading is immediately preceded by a psalm versicle called '*qədmä wängel məsbak*' ('Announcement/Proclamation [said] before the [reading of the] Gospel'), or simply '*məsbak*' (from ሰሐክ ፣, *säbäkä*, 'to proclaim', 'to preach', 'to announce').²³

²⁰ For more details see Zanetti 1985, 33–36.

²¹ Fritsch 2001, 33–36.

²² On the term *liq* see 'Liq', *E Ae*, III (2007), 576a–578a (E. Sokolinskaia).

²³ See Wäldä Rufa²el zäDäbrä Bizän 1921/1922, 15 *passim*; 'Gəbrä Həməmat', *E Ae*, II (2005), 725b–728b (U. Zanetti); Fritsch 2001, 30–31; 'Məsbak', *E Ae*, III (2007), 939b–

Let me digress here to say a few words about the *məsbak*, an important element of the Liturgy of the Word. The *məsbak* has always been an integral part of the Liturgy of the Word of the *Qəddase* and of the Liturgy of the Hours or *mablet*. The psalm versicle is sung alternatively by the deacon, repeating it twice, and by the people, repeating it three times. The *məsbak* has never lost its importance in the Liturgy of the Word and is also called 'mäzmur' (psalm) to indicate its origin in the Book of Psalms.²⁴ Thus it is not surprising that the small but interesting *Gəṣṣawe* (provenance of the monastery of Gundä Gunde), ascertains that the unique source of the *məsbak* is the Book of Psalms, preferring to use the term 'መዝሙር ፡ ዘቀዳሳዊ ፡ #' (*mäzmur zäq'ərban*, 'psalm/hymn for the Eucharistic Liturgy'),²⁵ rather than the usual term *məsbak* or *qədmä wängel*. The *məsbak* can never be replaced by songs and hymns, nor may it be omitted. If the Gospel is read, it must be preceded by the *məsbak*. The reading of the psalm is intended as a pointer to the mystery celebrated, as a fitting meditation on the Word of God of the day, and as an inspiration for the homily.

Teachers are often obsessively concerned about how the deacon should sing the *məsbak* during the liturgical services. Recently, *Abba* Ṭə'umä Ləssan Kidanä Maryam, a teacher of *zema* (liturgical chant) at the most important monastery of Däbrä Abbay,²⁶ republished the *Mäṣhafä gəṣṣawe*.²⁷ In the Foreword to the book, the teacher accepts that the lectionary he has edited does not bear the stamp of originality; it is simply a reprint, combining the editions of 1945 EC (= 1952/1953 CE) and 1977 EC (1984/1985 CE).²⁸ He emphasizes the fact that the only originality of this new lectionary is that he himself provided the musical notation for each *məsbak* in the lectionary. Each *məsbak* should be performed according to the 'pleasant music of Däbrä Abbay', the famous centre of traditional education, the *Mäzɡäbä qəddase bet* ('house of the *Qəddase*').²⁹ In doing so, not only is the uniformity of the melody of the *məsbak* retained and assured

940a (Habtemichael Kidane). For a different kind of *məsbak* see Habtemichael Kidane 1998, 177–184.

²⁴ See the *Mäṣhafä gəṣṣawe* of Gundä Gunde, monastery of Gundä Gunde, GG-046 (date: 1939 EC = 1946/1947 CE); on this famous monastery see 'Gundä Gunde', *EAE*, II (2005), 917b–919a (R. Beylot and Red.).

²⁵ GG-046, fol. 6v, *passim*.

²⁶ 'Däbrä Abbay', *EAE*, II (2005), 7a–8a (J. Persoon and D. Nosnitsin).

²⁷ Ṭə'umä Ləssan Kidanä Maryam 2013/2014, 7.

²⁸ Fritsch 2001, 44–52.

²⁹ 'Qəddase bet', *EAE*, IV (2010), 281b–282a (Habtemichael Kidane).

within the whole church, but also the singer has no need to struggle to perform the *məsbak* correctly, nor is he tempted to invent his own melody.

The *məsbak* does not and cannot offer clear information about the Old Testament readings in the Eucharist or in the Divine Office of the Hours. The term *məsbak*—which, as we saw above, can mean announcement/proclamation—also indicates an elevated place where the lectern, called in Gəʿəz አትራኖስ ፣ *atranos*,³⁰ is kept. As the *Mäṣḥafä bərhan* ('Book of light') of Zärʿa Yaʿqob tells us, readings from the Holy Scripture are proclaimed from this elevated place:

In the church on an elevated pulpit they (the readers) should read the Holy Scriptures, taking (them) from the Octateuchus, from the books of all the Prophets and from the history of all the Apostles. After this, they should read from the Gospel, because this represents the fulfilment of the Scriptures.³¹

³⁰ The Greek word θρόνος ('cathedra', 'throne', 'chair') is written in Gəʿəz in various ways: አጥሮንስ (*atronəs*), አትራኖስ ፣ (*atranos*), አትሮን ፣ (*atron*), አትሮንስ ፣ (*atronəs*), ትሮኖስ ፣ (*tronos*), meaning 'throne', 'chair', 'lectern', 'reading desk' (in Amharic የመጽሐፍ ፣ ወንበር ፣, 'the chair of the book'), 'pulpit'; see Dillmann 1865, 765b; [Ethiopian Orthodox Täwähədo Church] 1969/1970, 85; Kidanä Wäld Kəflä 1955/1956, 249a, 335a; Dästa Täklä Wäld 1969/1970, 148; Leslau 1991, 46b, 47b. This word is used in the Gəʿəz liturgy to indicate the raised place (Kidanä Wäld Kəflä 1955/1956, 845a) where the lectern is found in the church, from which the reader proclaims the Word of God and teachers (preachers) impart their knowledge—and also proclaim the Word of God. Corresponding words in Gəʿəz are መንበር ፣ (*mänbär*, 'chair') or ዙፋን ፣ (*zufan*, 'throne'). In the *Säʿatat* these words are used in expressions such as 'አልቦ ፣ አሚሃ ፣ ጽንዓ ፣ ሰማያት ፣ ከመ ፣ ይኩን ፣ መንጸፊ ፣ ለአትሮንስ ፣ መለኮቲ ።', 'In that time there was no powerful heaven that could be the carpet for the throne of his divinity' (EMML 204, fol. 66v); 'ሱብሐት ፣ ለእግዚአብሔር ፣ እሳት ፣ አትሮንሱ ።', 'Glory to God whose throne is the fire' (EMML 2097, fol. 161v). Furthermore, in the *Säʿatat*, Mary is hailed with a salutation in which the terms 'throne' and 'chair' are used—with the same meaning: (1) 'ሰላም ፣ ለኪ ፣ አትሮንስ ፣ መለኮት ።', 'Hail to you, o throne of divinity'; (2) 'ሰላም ፣ ለኪ ፣ መንበር ፣ ሱብሐት ።', 'Hail to you, o throne [chair] of glory' (EMML 204, fol. 56v). After the liturgical services, the lectionary always remains on the lectern, closed. The deacon who takes care of the book is called *atrons diyaqon*, 'the deacon of the lectern' (Fritsch 2013, 15).

³¹ Conti Rossini and Ricci 1965, 19 (tr.); translation from Italian my own.

3 Old Testament Readings during Lent

Before describing the readings of the Old Testament in the celebration of the *Sä'atat*, a brief excursion into Old Testament readings during the celebration of the Yaredian Liturgy of the Hours in Lent is not out of place.³² Somewhat unexpectedly, in Lent both the *Ṣomä dagg^wa* ('Hymnary for Lent')³³ and the *Mə'əraf zäsom* ('Ordinary for Lent')³⁴ give instructions on readings from the Old Testament, especially from the Prophets, without however giving the exact biblical passages. Similarly, MS Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. et. 131, 111r (twentieth century),³⁵ a manuscript containing the *Mə'əraf*, gives instructions not only on readings from the Old Testament, but also indicates when and what to read during the time of Lent. There is a clear directive that during the first half of Lent, from the beginning until *Däbrä Zäyt*,³⁶ the Book of Isaiah is to be read.³⁷ In the second part of Lent, from *Däbrä Zäyt* until (but not including) *Hoša'əna*, the Book of Ezekiel is to be read. Although it is not specifically indicated, we believe that the reading of these biblical lessons should be continuous (*lectio continua*) up to the end: this assumption is based on a directive concerning the Book of Isaiah, that is supposed to be read entirely during Lent, as reported both in the *Ṣomä dagg^wa* and in the *Mə'əraf*: 'ወእምዛ፡ መጽሐፈ፡ ኢሳይያስ፡ በበንስቲት፡ ኣንብብ፡።' ('*wä'amzə mäṣḥafä Isayäyyas bäbbänästit anbəb*', 'and then read from the Book of Isaiahs, little by little').³⁸ These random instructions regarding readings from the Prophets during Lent require further investigation. There are two possibilities:

³² Habtemichael Kidane 1998, 226–227.

³³ For the *Ṣomä dagg^wa*, see Velat 1966a; 1969.

³⁴ The *Mə'əraf* is the common part of the Yaredian Divine Office (Velat 1966b; 1966c).

³⁵ For a detailed description of the codex see Grébaut and Tisserant 1935, 527–534.

³⁶ Fritsch 2001, 197–198.

³⁷ During Lent, readings from the *Didascalia*, *Senodos*, and *Testamentum Domini* are proposed during the celebration of the Yaredian Liturgy of the Hours ([Ethiopian Orthodox Täwahädo Church] 1999/2000, 16b, 21b; Täsa Gäbrä Šällase 1992/1993, 114a; Getatchew Haile 2017, 344, 381). All these and other church rules are very important for those who serve in the church. In fact, the *Mäṣḥafä qəddasə* (Missal) unambiguously declares that, if bishops, priests, and deacons are not well-acquainted with these and other books that lead to salvation, they are not allowed to enter the church for any liturgical service (Käfle Gäräma Wäldä Kidan 1995/1996, 36).

³⁸ See EMMML 1206, fol. 176r (Getatchew Haile 1979, 172–179); Täsa Gäbrä Šällase 1992/1993, 120; [Ethiopian Orthodox Täwahädo Church] 1999/2000, 16b, 21b; Getatchew Haile 2017, 344, 381; IES 695/EMML 1571, fols 21v–22r.

they are either simply a remnant of a local attempt by Zär'a Ya'qob to enrich the Liturgy of the Word with Old Testament readings or they reflect something that the Ethiopian Church developed under Coptic influence, following the practices of the mother church.³⁹ However, it is well known that reading from the Prophets during Lent has long been practised not only in the Coptic Church but elsewhere. The Prophets encourage penance, announce the imminent destruction of Jerusalem, and are to be read in preparation for the coming of Christ. However, the reform of the liturgy—a major project that was most noticeable between the end of fourteenth and the beginning of fifteenth centuries—involved a reduction in the number of readings from the Old Testament in the Liturgy of the Hours and in the traditional teaching within the churchyard.

Among the *liqawənt* there are two different opinions regarding the usage of the Old Testament in the Liturgy of the Word: those who do not object to including the Old Testament books taught in the traditional schools in the Liturgy of the Word, and those who prefer to be cautious about including Old Testament books in the Liturgy of the Word, especially those books which are difficult for the faithful to understand—this even includes books of the New Testament.

The Book of Revelation, also called *Abuqälämsis*,⁴⁰ is one of the biblical books not read so often in the Liturgy of the Word during the liturgical year. It is rather a book to be read in the traditional *andämta* commentary school, where its meaning can be explained. Its rare use in the *Qəddase's* Liturgy of the Word, attested in the printed *Mäṣḥafä gəṣṣawwe*, is a late attempt by the teachers to introduce the reading of the Book of Revelation in the *Qəddase*. The *Mäṣḥafä gəṣṣawwe* gives very few passages of the Book of Revelation to be read during the *Qəddase's* Liturgy of the Word.⁴¹ The outstanding church scholar and very influential author of the second half of

³⁹ In the Coptic Church there are readings from Old Testament books during Lent in the 'Morning Prayer of the Incense' (Baumstark 1930, 37–58).

⁴⁰ This book (ራእይ ፡ ዮሐንስ ፡ *Ra'ayä Yohannäs*, 'Vision of John') is known as ቀለምሲስ ፡ *Qälämsis*, or አቡ-ቀለምሲስ ፡ *Abuqälämsis*, which is a corruption of the Greek *apokálypsis* (Dillmann 1865, 758b; Kidanä Wäld Kəfle 1955/1956, 198–199; Leslau 1991, 429; Cowley 1983, 81).

⁴¹ ፒጅ-ሙኔ ለጅሰን ክዳኔ ማሃም 2013/2014, 75, 115, 117, 164–167, 178; Fritsch 2001, 104, 107, 119, 120, 127, 275.

the twentieth century, *Mäl'akä bərhan* Admasu Ğämbäre,⁴² is believed to be the one who advocated a reading of the *Abuqälämsis* in the *Qəddase*, replacing the second reading (from the Catholic Epistles). He did so, against the majority opinion of the *liqəwənt*, who were opposed to its being read during the Liturgy of the Word because it is not simple enough for the people to understand. The following rubric recommends its being read on Sundays and on the Marian feasts, during the celebration of the *Säc atāt*:⁴³ ‘በዕለተ ፡ እሑድ ፡ ወበበዓል ፡ ለእግዝእትነ ፡ ማርያም ፡ አንብብ ፡ ራእየ ፡ ዮሐንስ ።’ (‘Read from the Book of the Revelation on Sundays and on Marian feasts’).⁴⁴ However, Holy Saturday is the only day on which the Book of Revelation is read in its entirety, as is attested by the following rubric: ‘On the sixth hour of [Holy] Saturday, let the people gather for the reading of the Revelation of John, the Book of Apocalypse, from the beginning to the end of it’.⁴⁵

4 Old Testament Reading during the Celebration of the *Säc atāt*

What has been said so far does not support the argument that the sporadic readings from the Old Testament in the *māhlet* during Lent somehow influenced Giyorgis or his school to introduce Old Testament readings into the *Säc atāt*,⁴⁶ that is, that the Old Testament readings read during Holy

⁴² Two important works by Admasu Ğämbäre should be mentioned here: Admasu Ğämbäre 1956/1957; 1961/1962. On Admasu Ğämbäre, see ‘Admasu Ğämbäre’, *EAE*, V (2014), 221a–b (Tedros Abraha).

⁴³ The manuscripts of the *Säc atāt* give the following passages of the Book of Revelation to be read on Sunday at the sixth night-time hour (midnight): Rev. 1:1–20 (EMML 204, fols 134r–135r; EMML 4493, fols 81v–82r); at the ninth night-time hour (3 am): Rev. 19:11–16 (EMML 204, fols 137v–138r; EMML 4493, fol. 83r); and at the eleventh night-time hour (5 am): Rev. 3:22, 4:1–11, 5:1–5 (EMML 204, fol. 138r–v; EMML 4493, fol. 83r–v). In the *Gädl* of *Abba* Samu’el of Waldəbba it is written that the holy man used to read from the Book of Revelation every time he recited his prayers (Colin 2013, 110–111).

⁴⁴ Täsfa Mika’el Gäbrä Šəllase 1996/1997, 140; translation my own.

⁴⁵ The text in Gəʿəz is ‘ወበስድስቱ ፡ ሰዓት ፡ ዘቀዳሚት ፡ ይትጋበኡ ፡ ሕዝብ ፡ ወያንብቡ ፡ ራእየ ፡ ዮሐንስ ፡ መጽሐፈ ፡ አቡቀለሞሲስ ፡ እምጥንቱ ፡ እስከ ፡ ተፍጻሚቱ ።’, [Ethiopian Orthodox Təwəhədo Church] 1942/1943, 65; translation my own. Cf. Fritsch 2001, 357; Getatchew Haile 2017, 346 (ed.), 386 (tr.).

⁴⁶ Old Testament readings are also recommended during the celebration of the *məbəlla* (Stational Liturgy/Rogations); see London, British Library, Endangered Archives Programme (= EAP), EAP286/1/1/31 (nineteenth century), fol. 175r–v, http://hviewer.bl.uk/IamsHViewer/Default.aspx?mdark=ark:/81055/vdc_100024764263.0x

Week (recorded in the *Gäbrä ḥämamat*) were a model the author used to justify the inclusion of Old Testament readings in the *Säc'atat*. Nor can it be argued that the introduction of Old Testament readings into the Yaredian Divine Office is simply a consequence of the substantial efforts made by Zär'a Ya'qob, who championed inclusion of the Old Testament into liturgical services and other rituals. Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that the Coptic Church and other Oriental liturgical traditions often included readings from the Old Testament in the liturgy of Lent and Holy Week.

The reading of both the Old Testament and the New Testament during the celebration of the *Säc'atat* of Giyorgis (sometimes replacing the first and/or the second New Testament reading) contrasts strongly with the practices of the contemporary Ethiopian Church. It is not easy to know why Giyorgis included this rather unusual innovation in the church services. The Yaredian Divine Office, to which Giyorgis dedicated his life, studying, teaching,⁴⁷ and influencing its practices,⁴⁸ does not employ reading(s) from the Old Testament, except during Lent, as we saw above.

As for the inclusion of Old Testament readings into Giyorgis's *Säc'atat* and Zär'a Ya'qob's insistence on their inclusion,⁴⁹ I here offer the hypothesis that the Sabbath controversy has an important role in any explanation of the introduction of Old Testament readings into the *Säc'atat*.

What is known is that in both the contemporary Liturgy of the Word of the *Qəddase* (Eucharistic Liturgy) and the Yaredian Liturgy of the Hours (Divine Office of the *Dəgg'w'a*) or *Šər'atä məhlet*, the scripture readings are taken only from the New Testament. The *Mäṣḥafä gəṣṣawe* gives no indication of the use of Old Testament readings. However, somewhat surprisingly, the *Mäṣḥafä säc'atat* of *Abba* Giyorgis Säglawi, a fifteenth-century local composition, includes Old Testament readings in its hourly celebrations. One or more Old Testament readings for each hour are prescribed to be read along with the four New Testament readings. Thus, I argue that the introduction of the Old Testament lessons into the *Säc'atat* is rooted in the following beliefs.

1) The 'Sabbath question' contributed to the introduction of Old Testament readings on Saturdays in order to better understand the greatness of the

000003). Concerning the *məḥəlla* days, see Habtemichael Kidane 1998, 286–303; Fritsch 2001, 47.

⁴⁷ Betä Maryam Gəzaw 2000/2001, 1.

⁴⁸ Ləssanä Wäraq Gäbrä Giyorgis 1997, 214–215.

⁴⁹ Getatchew Haile 2013, 63–64 (ed.), 44–45 (tr.).

day on which God rested. A *dørsan* (homily) called 'Dørsanä sänbät' ('The homily of the Sabbath', for instance MS EAP254/1/66, fols 4r–35v, twentieth century) exists concerning the *qädamit sänbät* (the first, biblical, *sänbät*) to be read each month of the year.⁵⁰ Here, we read about the greatness of the *qädamit sänbät* because, on this day, God rested from his activities ('አዕረፈ ፡ እግዚእነ ፡ እምኩሉ ፡ ግብሩ ፡ ወእምተግብሩ ፡', 'Our Lord rested from his work and from all his activities', Gen. 2:2, EAP254/1/66, fol. 4r). In this homily, Christians are reminded that they should refrain from work and celebrate this day, offering sacrifice (*q^wərban*), giving alms, loving one other, and so on. However, in this homily, there is no indication of the necessity of biblical readings on this day, since the main aim of the text is to underline the greatness of the *qädamit sänbät*. The inclusion of Old Testament readings was then extended to the *sänbätä krəstiyān* (Sunday), given that the two Sabbaths are equal in importance. In fact, in the *Mälkä'a sänbät*, the two Sabbaths (*qädamitā sänbät* and *sänbatā krəstiyān*) belong to God and both must be honoured equally.⁵¹ The author of the *Mäṣḥafä məṣṭir* ('Book of mystery') says that Christians 'must celebrate correctly both days and give them to Christ'.⁵² The plural form *sänabət* or *sänbätat* suggests the equality of the two days.

2) Furthermore, the Old Testament should be read in the *Sä'atat* because the Scripture is the Word of God, and the Church should read from both Testaments without discrimination. The Church should read, love, and listen to the Scriptures because they are the Word of God and give wisdom.

3) In addition, reading from both Testaments is justified by the Fathers: (a) If you read from the books of the Prophets, you will find where they prophesied the coming of Christ from the heavens, his being born of Mary twice Virgin, his death, his resurrection, and his ascension into heaven; (b) If you read the books of the history of the Apostles, you will read how they saw him and touched the Son of God.

4) Most importantly, the need for readings from both the Old Testament and the New Testament becomes more than evident when they are seen to symbolically represent the two breasts of the Church. This is clear in Giyorgis, and subsequently in other local saints' *gädl* ('life' or 'spiritual combat'). The Church takes care of her children giving them proper nutrition from the Word of God, contained in the two Testaments. In fact, in the

⁵⁰ 'Dørsanä sänbät', *EAE*, II (2005), 141a–142b (D. Nosnitsin).

⁵¹ [Ethiopian Orthodox Täwähedo Church] 2003/2004.

⁵² Quoted in Habtemichael Kidane 2017, 339.

Sä'atat, it is rightly said that the Old and New Testaments are two precepts of the Church. It is unthinkable that a child of the Church would suckle from one breast and not the other. Thus, the children of the Church must be fed from the two sources which are the two Testaments, the breasts of their Church.

5 The Role of the 'Sabbath Controversy'

Studies show that the 'Sabbath question' was a major turning point in the history of the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwähädo Church, introducing a familiarity with Old Testament readings into the spiritual life of Christians. The Ethiopian Fathers of the Church realized that readings from the Old Testament are an edification for Christians, increasing their awareness of the greatness of the Sabbath so that they might observe it as the Apostles instructed, and may serve to heal the conflict between the two groups—those in favour of the observance of the Sabbath and those who are against it—and, most importantly, to make men wise through the Scriptures. In its essence, the system of the biblical readings (which comprises both Testaments), adopted almost in every hour of the *Sä'atat*, implicitly recognizes the importance of the Sabbath. According to the adherents of the Sabbath, lack of knowledge of the Scriptures was seen as a hindrance to Sabbath observance, and therefore to the correct knowledge of the day sanctified and set aside by God. The observance and equal veneration of Saturday and Sunday ensures that Christians 'dwell in Paradise'.⁵³ Thus, from that time on, the Fathers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwähädo Church would insist on reading from the Old Testament in the liturgical services and in gatherings devoted to religious instruction.

It seems that the Old Testament readings were probably first introduced during the *Sä'atat* of Saturday in order to better understand the importance of the day on which God rested (Exodus 20:8–11, Genesis 2:2) and to celebrate the liberation from Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:12–15). The acceptance of Old Testament readings in the liturgy was gradual. In the Liturgy of the Word of the *Sä'atat* of Saturday, the term ሆየላንታ, *həyyäntä* ('instead of', 'in the place of') indicates that Old Testament readings were not part of the original liturgy, confirming that Old Testament readings replaced those of the New Testament. This term is found in the rubrics of the *Sä'atat* of Saturday where it is said, 'Instead of Paul[s] Epistle], you read from the Book

⁵³ Hummel 2015, 82–83; cf. Conti Rossini and Ricci 1965, 54–73 (ed.), 32–44 (tr.).

of Genesis', 'Instead of Paul[']s Epistle], you read from the Book of Exodus', or 'Instead of the Catholic Epistle (*Hawarya*) you read from the Prophet Isaiah'.⁵⁴ The content of these texts that replace the first and the second readings indicates which changes the Sabbath controversy achieved, and points towards the origins of Old Testament lessons in the *Sä'atat*.

In the following, we will see in greater detail that each hour of the *Sä'atat* of Giyorgis has one to three lessons from the Old Testament. I believe that the Sabbath controversy in Ethiopia and the translation of the *Senodos* and of other pseudo-apostolic literature share equal responsibility for the introduction of Old Testament readings into the *Sä'atat*. The influence of the pseudo-apostolic literature on the *Sä'atat* and on the Sunday *Dəggwa* is significant and is an important reason for Christians to honour the two Sabbaths as is stressed in the passages read during the evening hours of Friday and Saturday. Texts from the *Didascalia* and *Senodos*, that specifically order Christians to observe both Sabbaths, since both belong to God, are read during the celebration of the *Sä'atat* at the following hours:

⁵⁴ EMMML 204, fols 110v, 111r, and 114v. See also Gäbrä Šəllase Bərhanu 2007/2008, 138–139; Tə'umä Ləssan Kidanä Maryam 2013/2014, 105–106; Täsfä Mika'el Gäbrä Šəllase 1996/1997, 84. In EMMML 204 it is mentioned that the lessons taken from Leviticus and from the Prophet Jeremiah are read in place of Paul ('ህዩንተ ፡ ጳውሎስ ፡ አሪት ፡ ዘሌዋውያን ፡') and the Catholic Epistles ('ህዩንተ ፡ ሐዋርያ ፡ ዘኤርሚያስ ፡ ነቢይ ፡') respectively (EMMML 204, fols 118v–119r). Here it is perhaps worth mentioning a fifteenth-century manuscript (Addis Ababa, Addis Ababa University, Library of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies (= IES), 695/EMMML 1571) concerning the lectionary, which claims Egypt (*Gəbš*) as its provenance: ገጸዊተ ፡ ግብጽ ፡, *Gəṣṣawitā Gəbš*, 'Egyptian *Gəṣṣawe*/Lectionary'. For a detailed description of the manuscript and its contents, see Fritsch forthcoming. This lectionary is a witness to the unusual Old Testament readings (*Orit*/Law and Prophets) of the *Qəddase* Liturgy of the Word celebrated on Holy Tuesday. These readings replace New Testament readings, and are introduced with the word ህዩንተ, *həyyäntä*, 'instead of': readings from Genesis instead of Paul's Epistles, from Zachariah instead of the Catholic Epistles, from Isaiah instead of the Acts. The manuscript gives only an incipit and desinit of the biblical texts. Similarly, on Holy Thursday, there is a reading from *Məšəfä Šälomon* (Prov. 6:1–17) instead of the Apostle (= Catholic Epistles), and from Isaiah 49:25b–51:1–8 instead of the Acts. Again, only the incipit and desinit of the biblical texts to be read are given. The replacement of the New Testament readings by the Old Testament during Holy Week, as proposed by the term ህዩንተ (*həyyäntä*, 'instead of'), is probably the only case in which the Old Testament is read in the *Qəddase* Liturgy of the Word (JES 695/EMMML 1571, fols 22r–23r). See Fritsch forthcoming.

1) On Friday evening, before Vespers: (a) from the Order of Peter and Paul,⁵⁵ and (b) from the *Didascalia* of the Apostles;⁵⁶

2) At the prayer of the twelfth night-hour: from the *Senodos* 65/66 (Ethiopian *Synodicon*);⁵⁷

3) Saturday evening service, continuing into Sunday: from the *Didascalia* of the Apostles.⁵⁸

The passages from the pseudo-apostolic literature embraced in the *Sä'atat* of Giyorgis that deal with observance of the two Sabbaths order Christians to rest on these two days, dedicating themselves to prayer and to the reading of the Bible.⁵⁹

6 Importance of the Old Testament in Church Life

The Church must read without any discrimination, love, and listen to the Scriptures because they are the Word of God. The *Senodos*, which underlines the importance of the Old Testament in church life, played an enormous role in influencing Church authorities to include Old Testament readings during the liturgical services or at other times; and to rest, to assemble, to pray, and to listen to the Word of God, as it is the source of our spiritual nourishment. It is clear that the gathering of the faithful on the two Sabbaths is aimed at prayer and listening to the word of the Scripture faithfully.⁶⁰ On these two days nothing is allowed, except reading from the (sacred) books as the following passage from the *Senodos* emphasizes: ‘ወካዕበ ፡ ደቤ ፡ ኢትሒጦ ፡ ወኢትሒዮጦ ፡ ቦቶን ፡ ምንትኒ ፡ ዘእንበለ ፡ አንብቦ ፡ መጻሕፍት ፡ ወነገረ ፡ ዘመለኮት ።’, “Furthermore”, he said, “do not do any trade (on the two Sabbaths) but (engage yourselves in) reading the Scriptures and theology”.⁶¹ On these days, Christians must ‘observe the Sabbaths and [...] learn the one faith from the great teachers’.⁶² A further passage from the *Didascalia* confirms this:

⁵⁵ EMLL 204, fol. 109r–v; EMLL 4493, fol. 69r–v; Getatchew Haile 1988, 238–239.

⁵⁶ EMLL 204, fols 109v–110v.

⁵⁷ EMLL 204, fols 121r–124r; EMLL 4493, fols 74r–75r; Getatchew Haile 1988, 234–236; Horner 1904, 69–70 (ed.), 210–213 (tr.).

⁵⁸ EMLL 204, fols 128v–130r; also Harden 1920, 179–181.

⁵⁹ EMLL 204, fol. 109r.

⁶⁰ EMLL 204, fol. 109r.

⁶¹ Hummel 2015, 86; translation my own.

⁶² Hummel 2015, 79.

And if thou desirest to know wisdom and doctrine, thou hast the Book of the Law, which is full of the glory of the Lord God. Keep far, then, from every evil work and doctrine of Satan, and every vain word which is not in the Law. But read what is in the Law of Ceremonies, that thou mayest understand and know certainly the glory of the Lord, who hath saved thee from the many snares of Satan.⁶³

Regarding the greatness of the Sabbath and the necessity of reading from the Old Testament, both Giyorgis and Zär'a Ya'qob frequently quote from the ancient Christian literature mentioned above. In the first hour of Friday evening the *Senodos* ('Order of Peter and Paul on the observance of the two Sabbaths') is read, where it is said that Christians should assiduously listen to the Word of the Holy Scriptures on Saturday and Sunday.⁶⁴

7 Old and New Testaments: The Breasts of the Church

As the sky is embellished with celestial bodies, the Church, too, is embellished and enriched with the books of the Old and New Testaments. It is God that embellishes the Church, giving her his Word contained in the two Testaments as asserted in the following prayer of glorification:

Glory to God who adorned the sky with the light of the sun, of the moon, and of the stars. [Glory to God] who adorned the Church with the words of the Law and Prophets, and with the words of the Gospel and of the Apostles, forever and ever. Amen.⁶⁵

Reading from the Old and New Testaments in the liturgical services of the *Sä'atat* has yet another solid and important basis. Metaphorically, the Old and New Testaments are the Church's breasts, which are like two young twin roes (S. of S. 4:5), where Christ rests and the Church's children are fed.⁶⁶ For the Ethiopian Church Fathers, the maternal image of the Church is fundamentally connected to the Word of God. Indeed, in the *Sä'atat*, it is said that 'the holy Church has generated us from you without impurity',⁶⁷ through listening to the Word.

⁶³ Platt 1834, 9 (tr.).

⁶⁴ EMMML 204, fol. 109r; Getatchew Haile 1988, 238–239.

⁶⁵ SG no. 4, fol. 16r; translation my own.

⁶⁶ SG no. 4, fol. 16r.

⁶⁷ SG no. 4, fol. 16r; translation my own.

The Church as a mother, feeding her children with the milk of her two breasts, the Old and New Testaments,⁶⁸ has long been a cherished image, an image which started to gain acceptance when Giyorgis, and then Zär'a Ya'qob and other local saints' *gädlät* compared the Old and New Testaments with the two breasts of the Church.

In his *Sä'atat*, Giyorgis said, 'I want you to grow up with the milk of the (two) breasts of the Church', which are the Old and New Testaments.⁶⁹ In the *Sä'atat*, one is greeted thus: 'With the gushing wine of the Torah, and with the fountain of the Gospel, which is milk, the bride has reared you from two breasts.'⁷⁰ Again, in his *Mäṣhafä məṣtir* ('Book of mystery'), Giyorgis said, 'He (God) is worthy of glory from the mouth of the vigilant angels and from the believers who were nourished by the milk of the (two) breasts of the Church.' He says again, 'The Church has only two breasts: the *Orit* and the Gospels.'⁷¹ They (the Old and New Testaments) are two precepts of the Church, so nobody can be fed from one (the right) breast and ignore the other, as it is said in the following passage:⁷²

ወአጥባቲሃሰ ፡ ትእዛዛተ ፡ ብሉይ ፡ ወሐዲስ ፡ አልቦ ፡ ሕፃን ፡ ዘይጠቡ ፡ የማና
 የ ፡ ወያጎድግ ፡ ፀጋማየ ፡ ወአልቦ ፡ ካዕበ ፡ ዘይጠቡ ፡ ጸጋምየ ፡ ወያጎድግ ፡ የ
 ማናየ ፡ እስመ ፡ ኢትብቀዕ ፡ ብሊት ፡ እንበለ ፡ ሐዲስ ። በከመ ፡ ኢያሐቱ ፡ ፈ
 ትል ፡ እንበለ ፡ ቅብዕ ፡ ኢትብቀዕ ፡ ሐዳስኒ ፡ እንበለ ፡ ብሊት ፡ በከመ ፡ ኢይ
 በቀዕ ፡ ቅብዕ ፡ እንበለ ፡ ፈትል ። ወብርሀነ ፡ ማጎቶትሰ ፡ የዐርፍ ፡ ማዕከለ ፡ ፪
 ሆን ፡ በከመ ፡ ያዐርፍ ፡ ክርስቶስ ፡ ማዕከለ ፡ ብሊት ፡ ወማዕከለ ፡ ሕዳስ ፡ ወበእ
 ንተዝ ፡ ትነግር ፡ ቤተ ፡ ክርስቲያን ፡ በመሐልየ ፡ መሐልይ ፡ እንዘ ፡ ትብል ፡
 ማዕከለ ፡ አጥባቲየ ፡ የዐርፍ ።

'The (two) precepts, the Old and New (Testaments), are (two) breasts (of the Church). There is no baby that sucks at the right breast (of his mother) and abandons the left one; again, nobody sucks at the left breast only abandoning the right one, because the Old is worthless

⁶⁸ Conti Rossini and Ricci 1964–1965, 142 (ed.), 84 (tr.). Cf. also Wendt 1962, 48 (tr.).

⁶⁹ EMM 204, fol. 102r; translation my own.

⁷⁰ EMM 204, fol. 88v (translation my own), this is a *qəme*-type rhyming hymn, so it is not easy to get the profound meaning of the phrase. Of Zär'a Ya'qob it is said that he drank and quenched himself from the abyss of the sea of the *Orit* and of the milk of the Gospel (Bausi 1995, 56).

⁷¹ Ya'qob Beyene 1990, 266 (ed.), 217 (tr.); see also Wendt 1962, 54 (ed.); translation my own. There is no doubt that by *Orit* and Gospels he means the Old and New Testaments.

⁷² SG no. 4, fol. 16r.

without the New (Testament); as the wick is worthless without the oil, so the Old is worthless without the New. The New without the Old is worthless, as the oil is worthless without the wick. So, as the light of the lamp is lying between both of them (the wick and oil), Christ too is lying between the Old and New (Testaments). For this reason the Church with (the words of) the Song of Songs proclaims saying, “He (Christ) is lying between my breasts.”⁷³

Giving a symbolic meaning to the second hour of the day, the *liqawənt* say, “The second hour of the day is seen as the two breasts of the law which are the New and the Old (Testaments),⁷⁴ and ‘both breasts flowed with milk: the first one as the foundation and the second one as the fulfilment of the Word.’⁷⁵ It becomes clear that what Giyorgis Säglawi, King Zär’a Ya’qob, and other Fathers of the Ethiopian Church wished to see was that Christians grow with complete nourishment from both breasts of the Church.⁷⁶ According to MS SG no. 4, the following is recited for believers at the sixth hour of the day:

አእግዚአ ፡ ዘረሰይከ ፡ ላቲ ፡ አጥባተ ፡ ሕግ ፡ ለቤተ ፡ ክርስቲያን ፡ ረስየነ ፡ ንጥቡ ፡ ዘእንበለ ፡ ጽርዓት ፡ ወንትመሀር ፡ እምኔሁ ፡ ዘእንበለ ፡ ሐኪት ፡ ንጸሊ ፡ ዘእንበለ ፡ ጽልሑት ፡ ወአንተኒ ፡ ተወከፍ ፡ ለነ ፡ ውስተ ፡ ኑኃ ፡ ሰማይ ፡ ለከ ፡ ስብሐት ፡ ወሰጊድ ፡ ለዓለመ ፡ ዓለም ፡ አሜን ።

‘O Lord, you who made breasts of law for the Church, make us (worthy) to suck (from them) ceaselessly, to learn from it without negligence, and to pray without deceit. And you (o Lord) accept our (prayer) into the high of heaven; glory and adoration to you, forever and ever. Amen.’⁷⁷

So Christians are invited by mother church and encouraged not to distance themselves from their mother.

⁷³ S. of S. 1:13; translation my own.

⁷⁴ The Gəʿəz text is ‘፪ ሰዓተ ፡ መዓልት ፡ ይተረጎም ፡ በክልኤቱ ፡ አጥባተ ፡ ሕግ ፡ ዘውአቶን ፡ ሐዲስ ፡ ወብሉይ ።’ (EAP286/1/1/147, fol. 9r); translation my own.

⁷⁵ The Gəʿəz text is ‘፪ሆን ፡ አጥባት ፡ ሐሊበ ፡ ፈልፈላ ፡ ቀዳሚት ፡ ሣረረት ፡ ወዳግሚት ፡ ፈጸመት ፡ ነቢበ ።’ (SG no. 4, fol. 53r-v); Matt. 26:52–53; translation my own.

⁷⁶ *Abba* Giyorgis was referring to the Holy Scriptures when he said, ‘Your Cross is an herb that makes the children of the faithful grow with the breast(s) of the holy Church’ (Getatchew Haile 2011, 75 (ed.), 107 (tr.)).

⁷⁷ SG no. 4, fol. 16r, compare with Raineri 2014, 100. Translation my own.

ለሐውጺታ ፡ ጸሐቁ ፡ እንተ ፡ እምነሃ ፡ ኢትርሐቁ ። በአጥባቲሃ ፡ ለቤተ ፡ ክርስቲያን ፡ ቅድስት ፡ ከመ ፡ ትልሀቁ ። ጽድቅ ፡ ተግባር ፡ ሰላም ፡ ትፈሪ ፡ ለእለ ፡ ጌሁ ፡ ንቤሃ ፡ አበሳ ፡ ትሰሪ ።

‘In order to grow (with the milk) of the breasts of the holy Church, visit her assiduously, and do not distance (yourselves) from her (the Church), (because) to those who go to her, she gives salvation, rewards peace and forgiveness of sin.’⁷⁸

The metaphor of the two Testaments as breasts of the Church is also found in the writings of Zär’a Ya’qob. He too considered the Old and New Testaments to be like two breasts of the same mother, the Church.⁷⁹ So the faithful must be fed with the milk of both breasts. ‘**ቤትሰ ፡ ዘይቤ ፡ ቤተ ፡ ክርስቲያን ፡ ቅድስት ፡ እንተ ፡ ባቲ ፡ ክልኤ ፡ አጥባት ። ወአጥባቲሃሰ ፡ ኦሪት ፡ ወነቢያት ፡ ወንጌል ፡ ወሐዋርያት ።**’ (‘As to what is said, “house” is the holy Church which has two breasts. Regarding its breasts, they are the Law (*Orit*/Torah), and the Prophets; the Gospels, and the (writings of the) Apostles’).⁸⁰ The King loved to call the faithful ‘**ደቂቅ ፡ ወንጌል ፡ እለ ፡ ተሐፀንክሙ ፡ በሐሊቦ ፡ አጥባቲሃ ፡ ለቤተ ፡ ክርስቲያን ፡**’, ‘(You are) children of the Gospel who are fed from the milk of the breasts of the Church’.⁸¹ The bride gives us the food of salvation and immortality from her breasts: ‘From these two books we partake of the body of the bridegroom, the bread of life and the precious blood, the blood of the divinity.’⁸²

It is said in the *Gädl* of *Abba* Tāwäldä Mādḥən, a holy monk who was a contemporary of Giyorgis and a strong supporter of the observance of Sabbath, as well as a disciple of Ewostatewos of the third generation,⁸³ ‘for he has built his soul with (the milk of the) two breasts (of the Church).’⁸⁴ It is not difficult to believe that the author of this *Gädl* was referring to the Old and New Testaments that he was reading, and, in particular, offering commentaries on the Sabbaths and the feast days to his disciples. *Abba* Fiḳtor

⁷⁸ EMMML 204, fol. 102r; translation my own.

⁷⁹ Gäbrä Mānfās Qəddus in his *Mälkä* is greeted as the one who was reared with the milk of the pure breasts of the Church, his chosen mother (Tāsfa Gäbrä Šəllase 2003/2004, 534).

⁸⁰ Wendt 1962, 54 (ed.); translation my own.

⁸¹ Getatchew Haile 1991, 66; translation my own.

⁸² Quoted in Habtemichael Kidane 1998, 229–230.

⁸³ ‘Tāwäldä Mādḥən’, *EAE*, IV (2010), 875b–876a (Tedros Abraha).

⁸⁴ Tedros Abraha 2009, 134–135; translation my own.

used to read to his disciples, and he told them they should regularly read the Scriptures.⁸⁵

Another important monk is Gäbrä Krəstos. He was *māmbəḥar* (or 'abbot') of Däbrä Maryam, a very important monastery in Eritrea.⁸⁶ Gäbrä Krəstos, who participated in the Council of Däbrä Məṭmaq (1450), used to read and explain the books of the Law to his disciples, and he used to exhort them,

Imparate il Salterio di David, non dimenticate i profeti, mangiate il miele di favo dalla *Orit*, suggete il latte dal Vangelo, tenete saldo l'ordine degli Apostoli, non mancate di andare la mattina presto in chiesa e riunitevi nel luogo dell'insegnamento per ascoltate la parola del Signore, come i vostri padri hanno stabilito, per ricevere la benedizione della Trinità.

'Learn the Psalter of David, do not forget the Prophets, eat honey from the *Orit*, suck the milk from the Gospel, hold firmly the order of the Apostles, do not miss going to church early in the morning and meet in the teaching place to listen to the word of the Lord, as your Fathers have established, to receive the blessing of the Trinity.'⁸⁷

In almost all the manuscripts containing the so-called *Major Sä'atat*, an important treatise is included which is known as the *Ṣälotä haymanot zä'Afraqəya* or the 'Prayer of Faith of Africa', also known as the 'Athanasian Creed', or as the 'Quicumque vult' by its Latin incipit.⁸⁸ At the end of

⁸⁵ Tedros Abraha 2009, 184–185.

⁸⁶ 'Däbrä Maryam', *EAE*, II (2005), 33a–b (G. Lusini).

⁸⁷ Bausi 1995, 56; translation my own.

⁸⁸ This treatise is sometimes found as part of the *Māṣḥafä sä'atat* (EMML 204, fols 102v–103v; SG no. 2); sometimes as part of the *Māṣḥafä məṣṭir* (Gundä Gunde, monastery of Gundä Gunde, GG-059, fols 194r–196r, seventeenth century; CFFC-033), or as part of a miscellanea (London, British Library (= BL), Or. 743, seventeenth century, see Wright 1877, 210; BL Or. 793, seventeenth century, see Wright 1877, 274–275). For its edition and translation into French see Guerrier 1915–1917, 68–76, 133–141; for its Italian translation see Raineri 2014, 97–99. Scholars differ as to the identity of the translator of the so-called *Ṣälotä haymanot zä'Afraqəya* ('Athanasian Creed') into Ethiopic or Gəʿəz. Some attribute it to Giyorgis, e.g. Cerulli 1956, 195; Ferenc 1985, 277; see also Derat 1994, 6 (I am thankful to the author for allowing me to read her unpublished work on *Abba Giyorgis*). The reason given for Giyorgis being the translator is perhaps because, in the colophon of the MS edited by Guerrier, one reads, 'brought to Ethiopia ...', and I, Giyorgis Säglawi, translated it (into Ethiopic)' (Guerrier 1915–1917, 73). Others attribute it to ʿḤnbaqom (sixteenth century),

the Gəʿəz version of the ‘Athanasian Creed’, is inserted something that underscores what we have said so far: ‘While we believe and confess this, let’s feed from the milk of the breasts of the Church, while we anathematize all the false doctrines of the heretics, forever and ever. Amen.’⁸⁹ This statement does not appear in the original text (Latin). Thus, it was probably inserted by the translator, motivated by his longing for ‘the milk from the breasts of the Church’, wanting to emphasize the necessity of teaching and accepting the Word (precepts) of God contained in both the Old and New Testaments. The Word of God helps Christians to believe faithfully and steadfastly in the ‘right Trinitarian and Christological doctrine’, which is necessary for salvation, as is written at the beginning of the treatise: ‘Whosoever wants to be saved (before all things) it is necessary that he pursues the right Catholic (universal Christian) faith, the apostolic one. (The Catholic faith) teaches the unity of the three Persons without mixture and without diversity.’⁹⁰ Furthermore, what is inserted in the final part of the Gəʿəz version of the Ethiopic ‘Athanasian Creed’ also concurs with the teachings of Giyorgis Säglawi and King Zär’ä Yaʿqob regarding the Church’s breasts.

Finally, the idea of comparing the Old and New Testaments to the two breasts of the Church preceded the Ethiopian *liqawənt* tradition. This metaphorical sense is certainly present in ancient documents, as is witnessed in Clement of Alexandria:

What a surprising mystery! There is a single Father in the universe, a single Logos in the universe, and also a single Holy Spirit, everywhere identical. There is also a single virgin (who has) become mother, and I like to call her the Church. This mother, alone, did not have

the eleventh abbot of Däbrä Libanos. ʿEnbaqom is indeed well known for his translation activities (‘ʿEnbaqom’, *EAE*, II (2005), 280a–282a (E. van Donzel); Cohen 2009, 97, n. 4), and he ‘was wise in his words and deeds, and preacher of the words of the faith’ (Getatchew Haile 2017, 341, 376). The fact that *Ṣälotä haymanot zäʿAfraḳaya* finds a place in some manuscripts of the *Säʿatat* and of the *Mäṣḥafä məṣtir* of Giyorgis, supports the idea that the *Bäʿalä säʿatat* could have translated the ‘Athanasian Creed’ into Gəʿəz.

⁸⁹ The above English translation is my own. The Gəʿəz text is as follows: ‘ዘንተ ፡ እንዘ ፡ ነ አምን ፡ ወዘንተ ፡ እንዘ ፡ ንትአመን ፡ [ወ]ንትሐፀን ፡ በሐሊበ ፡ አጥባቲሃ ፡ ለቤተ ፡ ክርስቲያን ፡ እንዘ ፡ ናወግዝ ፡ ከሱሉ ፡ ዕልወተ ፡ ዘመናፍቃን ፡ ለዓለመ ፡ ዓለም ፡ አሜን ።’ (Guerrier 1915–1917, 73; EMMML 204, fol. 105r; GG-059, fol. 196r; CFFC-033).

⁹⁰ Translation my own. The text in Gəʿəz is ‘ከሱሉ ፡ ለለአሐዲ ፡ ዘይፈቅድ ፡ ይድኃን ፡ ይኅሥሥ ፡ ሃይማኖተ ፡ ከቶሊክ ፡ እንተ ፡ ይእቲ ፡ ሐዋርያዊት ፡ እንተ ፡ ትሜህር ፡ ጽምረተ ፡ ሥላሴ ፡ ሥሉስ ፡ በኢቱሳሌ ፡ ወድሙረ ፡ በኢቡአዲ ።’ (Guerrier 1915–1917, 69).

milk because, alone, she did not become a woman; she is at the same time virgin and mother, intact as a virgin, full of love as a mother; she draws to her the little children and nurses them with sacred milk, the Logos of nursling.⁹¹

The metaphor depicting the two parts of the sacred Scripture (Old and New Testaments) as the two breasts of the Church from which the believers are nursed, is found in an ‘Eucharistic Catechesis’ originally composed in the fifth century and preserved in a Gəʿəz text known as the ‘Anonymous Ethiopian Homily’. In this homily, the Old and New Testaments are symbolized as the two breasts of the Church, from which she feeds her children, who, in return, must be respectful towards their mother. Here is the relevant text:⁹²

**ወተጸመዱ ፡ ቤተ ፡ ክርስቲያን ፡ ወኢትሰርቁ ፡ (sic for ወኢትርሐቁ ፡)⁹³ እምኔ
ሃ ፡ ለቤተ ፡ ክርስቲያን ፡ ከመ ፡ ትሕፅንክሙ ፡ በነቅዓ ፡ ሕይወት ፡ ዘይፈለፍ
ል ፡ ወይውሕዝ ፡ እምአጥባቲሃ ፡ ክቡራት ፡ ወቅዱሳት ፡ እለ ፡ እሙንቱ ፡ ሕ
ግ ፡ ወጽድቅ ፡ ከመ ፡ ቦቱ ፡ ይክፍልክሙ ፡ ለክሙሂ ፡ ወለነሂ ፡ ወንትፌሣሕ ፡
በመንግሥተ ፡ ሰማያት ።⁹⁴**

⁹¹ Quoted in Bolman 2004, 1177.

⁹² The Gəʿəz text of the homily, preserved in a manuscript dating to the fifteenth century, is contemporary with Ethiopian literature that deals with the relationship between the ‘breasts’ and the Word of God.

⁹³ The word **ኢትሰርቁ** (‘do not steal (from the Church)’) in the ‘Anonymous Ethiopian Homily’ must be a *lapsus calami* because it does not make sense.

⁹⁴ Fritsch 2019, 263 (ed.). The expression that we find in the MS EMMML 204, echoing what is said in the ‘Anonymous Ethiopian Homily’, invites Christians to always stay near the Church. There it is written, **‘ለሐውጺታ ፡ ጸሐቁ ፡ እንተ ፡ እምኔሃ ፡ ኢትርሐቁ ።’**, ‘visit the church assiduously, and do not distance (yourselves) from her (the Church)’ (EMMML 204, fol. 102r). King Zär’a Ya’qob too invites believers not to distance themselves from the Church, for only she can feed them, giving them the body and blood of Christ and feeding them with the words of the Holy Scripture. If somebody stays away from the Church, they cannot partake of the body and blood of Christ, which allow Christians to become members of the body of Christ (**‘ከመ ፡ ትኩኑ ፡ አባሎ ፡ ለክርስቶስ ።’**), and ‘those who distance themselves from church, demons shall shepherd them’ (Getatchew Haile 2013, 65 (ed.), 45 (tr.)). The statement of the *abun*, the antiphon sung at the matins of the Thursday of Zäwäradä (first week of Lent), says, **‘ነቂሐነ ፡ እምንዋም ፡ በሀ ፡ ንበላ ፡ ለቤተ ፡ ክርስቲያን ፡ ታሰሰል ፡ እምላዕሌነ ፡ ከሱሎ ፡ ፃማ ፡ ወሕማመ ፡ ኃዘነ ፡ ወሰይማነ ፡ በሀ ፡ ንበላ ፡ ለቤተ ፡ ክርስቲያን ፡ ወንሳለማ ፡ ወኢንጎድጋ ፡ ለቤተ ፡ ክርስቲያን ፡ በኩሎ ፡ ጊዜ ።’**, ‘having woken up from the sleep, let us say hail to the Church. She will remove from us every affliction and sickness, sadness and evil. Let us say hail

‘Be devoted to the Church and do not be far from the Church so she may rear you with the fountain of life which gushes out and flows from its honoured and holy breasts, which are the law and justification, so that (God) may recompense you and us for it (for your devotion), and we (all) shall rejoice in the kingdom of heaven.’⁹⁵

Thus, the Old Testament reading was introduced into the *Sä^catat* because it is one of the two breasts of the Church, and its children have to be fed by spiritual food. ‘Those who read (study) the *Orit*, the Prophets, Kings, and the Gospel in their life-time, inherit the Kingdom of God.’⁹⁶

At the time of Giyorgis and Zär^a Ya^cqob, the Church felt the necessity of reading from both the Old and the New Testaments with more consistency, not only to understand what is to be done on the two days sanctified by God, but also to understand the Word of God in its fullness. King Zär^a Ya^cqob had a decisive role in stressing the importance of both Testaments in the life of the Church. He insisted that the clergy read from both the Old and New Testaments in order to have a complete biblical understanding. He is very clear on this point. Christians should go to church early in the morning to hear the teaching, and listen to the Word of the Lord:

And let the Reader stand up in a high place, and read the Books of Moses, and of Joshua the son of Nun, and of the Judges, and the Kings and Chronicles, and the writings after the Captivity, after the return from Babylon, Job also, and Solomon, and the Fifteen Prophets. And then let them read in the Scriptures by two; and let one rise up and sing praises in the words of David, and let the people answer in praises. Then let them read the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles of Paul, our beloved fellow-labourer, which he wrote and sent to all the Churches, by the help of the Holy Spirit. And after this, let the Priest or Deacon read the Gospel, which we have given you, even I Matthew, and John, or that which Luke and Mark have set forth, the fellow-labourers with Paul, even that which they have set in order for you. [...] And then let

to the Church. Let us greet her, let us not abandon the Church at any time’ ([Ethiopian Orthodox Tāwahādo Church] 1999/2000, 29b; translation my own).

⁹⁵ The English translation is taken from Fritsch 2019, 253.

⁹⁶ Ephraim Isaac 2012, 70.

the Priests stand up one by one and confirm the people; and afterwards the Bishop, that he may save them by an exhortation.⁹⁷

Although the *Apostolic Constitutions* passage, quoted in Zär'a Ya'qob's *Mäṣḥafä bərhan*,⁹⁸ is part of the Eucharistic celebration framework,⁹⁹ the king does not seem to be interested in having the passage as part of the Liturgy of the Word. Nevertheless, we can be sure that he wanted the clergy and people gathered in the traditional schools to listen to the Word of God in its fullness. Zär'a Ya'qob, addressing his homily to the clergy, advised them saying,

Love listening to the Scriptures of God so that your heart might be firm; he will give you the love of wisdom. Read (the Scriptures) all the time and teach (them) to those who are assembled at school, because the teaching of the word of the faith burns Satan.¹⁰⁰

Entrusting his book (*Book of Light*) and his homilies to his clergymen, the King persistently commanded them to read and teach the Scriptures, especially on the two Sabbaths (Saturday and Sunday) in order to have the wisdom that shows the right way to worship the true God. He was obsessively worried by the fact that, in his time, the Church was unable to worship the true God because of idolatry.¹⁰¹ Thus, the believers were ordered to go to church on those two days to celebrate the *Qəddase* (Eucharistic celebration) and to listen to, and be taught, the Holy Scriptures.¹⁰²

In fact, the following passage from the *Didascalia* seems to be very close to what Zär'a Ya'qob was saying to his Church and his people:

Assemble yourselves together in the church, evening and morning; offer up praises, and sing; and read the Psalms of David, the sixty-second, and moreover the hundred and fortieth. And especially on the Jewish Sabbath, and on the first day of the week, the Christian Sabbath, which is the day of His holy resurrection, offer up praises and thanksgivings and

⁹⁷ Platt 1834, 93–94; see also Conti Rossini and Ricci 1965, 19 (tr.).

⁹⁸ Cf. Wendt 1962, 54 (ed.); Conti Rossini and Ricci 1965, 32 (ed.), 19 (tr.).

⁹⁹ Taft 2011, 281.

¹⁰⁰ Getatchew Haile 2013, 44 (tr.).

¹⁰¹ Fritsch 2013, 367–368.

¹⁰² A similar order is expressed in the *Fəṭḥa nägäšt* where it is said that when '[i]n the church you shall gather without laziness to read the Holy Books' (Paulos Tzadua 1968, 122).

glory to the Lord, [...] who was pleased to suffer according to his will, and was buried in the tomb, and rose again from the dead.¹⁰³

For Zär'a Ya'qob, the Church should read all of the Scripture because, 'Where there is no teaching of the Prophets and Apostles, God is not present.'¹⁰⁴ He continues, 'Do not cease going to school to hear the Divine Scriptures, for the spirit appears there.'¹⁰⁵ He also says, 'And you, priests, preach and teach the worship of God. Do not be slothful in reading the Scriptures of God; and do not cease going to the holy church.'¹⁰⁶ The readings from the Scripture are also justified by King Zär'a Ya'qob in the following manner:

If you read the books of the Prophets, there you will find where they (the Prophets) prophesied the coming (of Christ) from the heavens and his Nativity from Mary twice virgin, his death, his Resurrection, and his Ascension into heaven; if you read the books of the history of the Apostles, there you will find how they (the Apostles) saw him and touched the Son of God.¹⁰⁷

The use of the Old Testament alongside the New Testament in the liturgy is witnessed in the *Book of the Nativity* and the *Book of the Trinity*, both attributed to Zär'a Ya'qob. In the following passage, quoted from these books, we can see an early stage of including Old Testament readings in a ritualized context (namely, in this case, as part of a ritual of purification of a church or dwelling) in which texts from both Testaments are read by the deacon and the priest.

All you Christians, listen! When you hear that somebody is practising sorcery and any kind of impurity in your churches, in your place of prayer, and in your dwelling, you do not have to be sad or deeply worried. If you know that somebody has practised sorcery in your church, and you are sure of this fact, wipe it away and cleanse it thoroughly, calling the appointed priests and deacons to read (for you) from the *Orit* (Torah) and Prophets, and from the Gospel and the (writings of the) Apostles, over the water (repeatedly) until you have the energy to do it. And then say the prayer of Mary, the 'Magnificat', the prayer of

¹⁰³ Platt 1834, 99.

¹⁰⁴ Getatchew Haile 2013, 28 (tr.).

¹⁰⁵ Getatchew Haile 2013, 45 (tr.).

¹⁰⁶ Getatchew Haile 2013, 49 (tr.).

¹⁰⁷ Conti Rossini and Ricci 1965, 19 (tr.); translated from Italian.

the Gospel ‘Our Father’,¹⁰⁸ the ‘Prayer of Faith’ (‘Credo’)¹⁰⁹ and say [other] prayers. Pray and say, ‘*Ḫgzi'o mäharännä [Krstos]*’ (‘O Lord [Christ], have mercy on us’) together with those who are with you: the women, the faithful. (It is sure) that in doing so, every kind of sorcery (and impurity) will be expelled.¹¹⁰

This passage shows the use in a liturgical service of readings from both the Old and New Testaments, corresponding to what the Ethiopian authors recommended. Although these readings are in a ritualized context, this is not exactly a liturgical service, since it could be held inside a church, in a place of prayer or meeting, and even in a dwelling which has been desecrated. The order of the readings (Acts and Gospel) is not specified; the believers are invited to listen to the Word of God and to participate in the service. The readings and prayers could be prolonged or repeated as long as the faithful have the energy to continue. If the readings, prayers, and acts of cleansing are to be acceptable, nominated ministers (priests and deacons) are required. The readings and prayers are followed by the act of purification of the place desecrated (or vandalized) by those practising magic, by sprinkling the place with holy water. This text, which does not indicate where the rite is performed, is more likely to be employed outside of a liturgical service; however, it might indicate an early step towards the ritualized usage of Old Testament readings in some circumstances of church life.

¹⁰⁸ In this text, immediately following the phrase ‘*ጸሎተ ፡ ወንጌል ፡*’ (*Ṣälotä wängel*, ‘Prayer of the Gospel’) we find ‘*አቡነ ፡ ዘበሰጣዖት ፡*’, ‘Our Father, who art in heaven’, making clear what is only implicitly understood in the ‘Anonymous Ethiopian Homily’. When the homily insistently and repeatedly invites Christians to recite the ‘Prayer of the Gospel’, it is no other than the ‘Lord’s Prayer’. The believers should say it at any time: when they arrive in church, when they enter their homes, when they eat and drink, in fact, when they are doing anything. It is also said that Christians have to say the ‘Prayer of the Gospel (‘Our Father’) if they want God to keep them from temptation (Matt. 6:13). Emmanuel Fritsch, who has undertaken an accurate analysis of this homily, also identifies the ‘Prayer of the Gospel’ as the ‘Our Father’ (Fritsch 2019, 244; Beylot 1983–1984; Brakmann 1995, 112). ‘*ወሕዝብ ፡ ይቁሙ ፡ ለጸሎተ ፡ ወንጌል ፡*’ (‘let the people stand up for [the recitation of] the “Prayer of the Gospel”’; IES 695/EMML 1571, fol. 21v, fifteenth century); and ‘*ወትደግም ፡ ጸሎተ ፡ ሃይማኖት ፡ ወጸሎተ ፡ ወንጌል*’ (‘and you will recite the “Prayer of Faith” (Creed) and the “Prayer of the Gospel”’; IES 695/EMML 1571, fol. 22r–v) clearly refer to the ‘Our Father’.

¹⁰⁹ The ‘Credo’ is always said at the end of both the *Sä'atat* and the Yaredian Divine Office.

¹¹⁰ Wendt 1963, 49. The English translation is mine.

Table 1 Comparison between the Book of the Nativity and the *Sä^catat* of Giyorgis

Book of the Nativity/Trinity	<i>Sä^catat</i> of Giyorgis
1) [Introductory prayers: ‘In the name of the Father’; here the prayer is followed by the <i>Kəḥdätä Säyṭan</i> (‘Rejection of Satan’) ¹¹¹];	1) Introductory prayers: ‘In the name of the Father’, followed by the <i>Kəḥdätä Säyṭan</i> ; ¹¹²
2) [‘Prayer of Thanksgiving’: ‘We give you Thanks’];	2) ‘Prayer of the Seal’ ¹¹³
3) Scripture readings: OT: <i>Orit</i> (Law)/Prophet, NT: Acts, [<i>məsbak</i>], Gospel;	3) ‘Prayer of Thanksgiving’: ‘We give you Thanks’;
4) ‘Prayer of Mary’ [‘Magnificat’];	4) ‘Our Father’;
5) ‘Our Father’ (‘Prayer of the Gospel’);	5) <i>Mästäbq^wä^cat</i> (supplications);
6) ‘Prayer of Faith’ (‘Credo’);	6) Scripture readings: OT: <i>Orit</i> (Law)/Prophet, NT: [writings of the] Apostles, [<i>məsbak</i>], Gospel;
7) <i>Əgzi^o məḥbarännä Krəstos</i> (‘Lord Christ, have mercy on us’);	7) <i>Wəddase Maryam</i> (of the day);
8) [Closing prayers].	8) <i>Əgzi^o məḥbarännä Krəstos</i> (‘Lord Christ, have mercy on us); 9) <i>Šälotä barəkot</i> (‘Prayer of blessing’); 10) ‘Prayer of the Faith’ (‘Credo’); 11) Closing prayers.

The above text is comparable with what is found in the *Sä^catat*: (1) Scripture readings (Old and New Testaments); (2) the ‘Prayer of the Gospel’, namely the ‘Lord’s Prayer’; (3) the ‘Prayer of Faith’ (‘Credo’); (4) *Əgzi^o*

¹¹¹ I believe that the *Kəḥdätä Säyṭan* (‘Rejection of Satan’) has always been said as a prelude to daily prayers probably since the time of Zär^a Ya^cqob. The origin of the *Kəḥdätä Säyṭan* seems to go back to the King who hoped that Christians would wear a tattoo on their left hand with the following words: ‘I reject *Däsk* the accursed; I am a servant of Mary, mother of the creator of the entire universe’ (quoted in Dickinson 2017, 18). This tattoo reminds that they have to reject Satan. On the *Kəḥdätä Säyṭan* see Fritsch 2013, 366–369.

¹¹² The MS EMMML 2097, called *The Sä^catat of the Psalter* (Taft 1993, 270), starts with the *Kəḥdätä Säyṭan* (EMML 2097, fol. 2r).

¹¹³ For the text of this prayer see Getatchew Haile 2015, 79–86.

mäbarännä Krastos ('Lord Christ, have mercy on us'); (5) finally, introductory and closing prayers (see Table 1).

It is relevant to here mention a book that seems to suggest an extensive and expanded use of the Scriptures in church, throughout the year. I am referring to a book entitled የቤተ ክርስቲያን ጳውሎስ ጳውሎስ (Yäbetä krästiyān ṣälot = *BKŞ*, 'The prayer of the Church'),¹¹⁴ a book first composed, printed, and used in London in 1931 EC (1938/1939 CE) by the exiled Ethiopian Church during the exile of Emperor Ḥaylä Şällase (d.1974 CE). There is, of course, some influence of the country in which the book was first prepared and the Church in exile was hosted, the United Kingdom. The exiled Church, upon her return, proposed that it continue to be used in church. The biblical readings proposed by the *BKŞ* are found in the morning and evening prayers throughout the year; three readings from the Scriptures are proclaimed each day (*zäwätr*), structured as follows: (1) the first is a reading from the Old Testament; (2) the second is a reading from Paul's letters and the Catholic Epistles, (3) and the third is a reading from the Gospel. The idea behind this system was that the readings would be continuous,¹¹⁵ but, the attempt to read the whole Bible in one year did not succeed, nor did it find acceptance in the Church. The Church did not accept it because the book did not seem to continue in the spirit of what had started in the fourteenth/fifteenth century, that is, the spirituality of the liturgical year of the Church, the *Mäşhafä gəşşawe* system of reading (which seems to suggest the Egyptian system of the lectionary), and the *Mäşhafä dəgg^wa*, the latter being strongly imbued with both Testaments. Although many of its prayers, exhortations, and other readings, that constitute the morning and evening prayers are taken variously from the Gə'əz Missal, the *Dəgg^wa* (Hymnary), *Mə'əraf* (*Ordinary of the Divine Office*), *Sä'atat* (*Horologium*), *Gəbrä həmat* (*Acts of the Passion*), and others, I do not think that, in their attempt to read the entire Scripture, the authors of the *BKŞ* consciously followed the tradition of the *Sä'atat* of Giyorgis in their liturgical services. The *BKŞ* authors lived in a world whose tradition was completely different to the Ethiopian one.

Conclusion

The Orthodox Təwähədo Church has benefitted enormously from the contributions of Giyorgis Säglawi, Zär'a Ya'qob, and other Fathers of the Ethi-

¹¹⁴ [Ethiopian Orthodox Təwähədo Church] 1942/1943, 13, 139–164.

¹¹⁵ [Ethiopian Orthodox Təwähədo Church] 1942/1943, 139–164.

opian Church, especially regarding the use of the Old and New Testaments. Did the Ethiopian Fathers wish to include readings from the Old Testament throughout the liturgy? We can only guess. We know that the Fathers persistently recommended reading from the Scriptures without discrimination, both inside and outside the church.

Most probably, Giyorgis Säglawi and his disciples wanted to include readings from the Old Testament more frequently and more publicly in church life, inserting readings into the celebration of the Hours (*Horologium*) on the two Sabbaths and subsequently extending them into each hour of the day. In reading from the Old Testament, where the day sanctified and consecrated by God and dedicated to him, is mentioned, we have a good understanding of the Sabbath. Giyorgis wanted to introduce Old Testament readings into his *Sä'atat* and make use of them in his other books. By doing so, he hoped to convince his opponents that the Sabbath is not something that can be forgotten, simply because it is part of the Old Testament. The specific aim of reading from the Old Testament is to teach believers the importance and greatness of the Sabbath. This is certainly the reason why *Abba* Giyorgis, the pioneer and defender of the equality of the two Sabbaths (*sänbätat/sänabät*), wanted to give more space to the Old Testament.

The fact that some bishops were in favour of the Sabbath observance and tolerated a limited usage of the Old Testament in the liturgy, especially during the celebration of the *Sä'atat* of Giyorgis Säglawi, may well have had a positive effect. Old Testament readings in the liturgy were, however, rather limited, for we do not find any hint of them in the *Mäṣḥafä gəṣṣawwe* (Lectio-nary) that the Church uses at present, nor are they found in other types of *Sä'atat*. If the use of the Old Testament did not find its way into the Liturgy of the *Qəddase* and the Yaredian Divine Office, it is because the local Church has always followed what 'was arranged by our Egyptian Fathers'¹¹⁶ very conscientiously, remaining faithful to her liturgical traditions, despite the inevitable independent developments within the Ethiopian liturgy.¹¹⁷ Maybe, this fact could be taken as an indication that the Ethiopian

¹¹⁶ Marcos Daoud and Marsie Hazen 1954, 12, § 1.

¹¹⁷ In an article published in 2016, I attempted to explain how the Ethiopian Church, over the centuries, maintained the *Qəddase* (the Eucharistic Liturgy) exactly as transmitted by 'our Holy Egyptian Fathers'. However, within the *Qəddase* there are divergent elements (Habtemichael Kidane 2016) that show how the Ethiopian Church developed independently over the centuries. In fact, one should remember that the *liqawənt* showed their own ability by composing liturgical texts reflecting their own tradition (Zanetti 2016, 21–23).

Church did not fully grasp one of the breasts (Old Testament) of the Church in her liturgical rites (the *Qəddase*, the celebration of the sacraments, the Yaredian Liturgy of the Hours, etc.). We have seen above that some books of the Old Testament are only read in Lent during the Yaredian Divine Office. The Lenten season, where the old usage still survives, can definitely be considered as a witness to a tentative introduction of Old Testament readings into the liturgical life of the Church. Nevertheless, the idea of introducing Old Testament readings into the *Sä'atat* celebration and during Lent, served the purpose of teaching the faithful more than what is found in the *Mäṣḥafä gəṣṣawe* (Lectionary). Introducing readings from the Old Testament, the other breast of the Church, into the liturgy can be considered a failure because it was an unfulfilled dream. In fact, readings from the Old Testament, introduced at the time of Giyorgis Säglawi, and steadily advocated by Zär'a Ya'qob, are, to this day, limited to the *Sä'atat* of Giyorgis, as at the time of its author.

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Summary

This article considers the use of Old Testament readings in the *Säc atāt* ('Hours') of *Abba Giyorgis Säglawi* (d.1425), an unusual practice in Gəcəz liturgy. It is believed that the introduction of Old Testament readings into the *Säc atāt* went through various stages. It was first introduced on Saturdays to better understand the greatness of the day on which God rested. It was then extended to Sunday. It seems certain that the question of the Sabbath(s) influenced the introduction of Old Testament readings into the celebration of the *Säc atāt*. The Old Testament readings in the *Säc atāt* are protracted because the Scriptures are the Word of God, and therefore there should be no discrimination in their usage. Reading from both the Old and the New Testaments is also connected to the idea that they represent the two breasts of the Church, an image depicted more clearly in *Giyorgis* than in the *gädlāt* of other local saints. Thus, the children of the Church must be fed readings from both Testaments which are the breasts of their mother, the Church. Today, one finds readings from the Old Testament at almost every hour of the *Säc atāt*. However, readings from both Testaments did not extend beyond the *Säc atāt*, neither into the Liturgy of the *Qəddasə* (Eucharistic celebration), nor the *Yaredian/Dəggəwā* Divine Office.