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## **Christocentric Exegesis in *The Letters of St. Jerome*. Based on Selected Examples**

### **Egzegeza chrystocentryczna zawarta w *Listach* św. Hieronima. Analiza przykładowych *Listów***

**Abstract.** This article presents examples of typological, prosopological and allegorical exegesis in *The Letters of Jerome of Stridon*. Deeply rooted in Christocentric interpretation they demonstrate how Christ is present in these texts. In carrying out his Christocentric exegesis, the Monk of Bethlehem draws on the works of Origen and combines the wealth of the Alexandrian and Antiochian schools. All this makes Stridonian's interpretation extremely profound and characterised by a particular reference to Christ. The exegesis present in the *Letters* fits in with that of the other Church Fathers. It must be emphasised that the biblical interpretation of the author of the *Vulgate* contributed significantly to the development of Christology and eschatology.

**Streszczenie.** Artykuł prezentuje przykłady egzegezy typologicznej, prosopologicznej oraz alegorycznej zawartej w *Listach* Hieronima ze Strydonu. Dotyczą one interpretacji chrystocentrycznej – ukazują, w jaki sposób Chrystus jest obecny w przywołanych tekstach. Przeprowadzając swoją egzegezę chrystocentryczną, Mnich z Betlejem korzysta z dzieł Orygenesusa oraz łączy ze sobą bogactwo szkoły aleksandryjskiej i antiocheńskiej. To wszystko sprawia, że interpretacja Strydończyka jest niezwykle głęboka i charakteryzuje się szczególnym odniesieniem do Chrystusa. Egzegeza obecna w *Listach* wpisuje się w egzegezę innych Ojców Kościoła. Trzeba podkreślić, że interpretacja biblijna Autora Wulgaty w sposób szczególnie przyczyniła się do rozwoju chrystologii i eschatologii.

**Keywords:** Jerome of Stridon, exegesis of Scripture, allegory, prosopology, typology, literal sense.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Hieronim, egzegeza Pisma Świętego, alegoria, prosopologia, typologia, sens dosłowny.

Jerome of Stridon is known as an outstanding translator, ascetic and also as an exegete. His teaching combines elements of Western and Eastern traditions. The monk from Bethlehem was able to choose what was significant and give it great and deep meaning. One of the elements that are worth analyzing thoroughly in this article is the biblical exegesis of the author of the *Vulgate*. In carrying it out, Jerome draws not only from Origen, from whom, towards the end of his life, he tries in vain to dissociate himself, but also from the Antiochian and Alexandrian traditions.<sup>1</sup> He tries to “transplant” this kind of exegesis to the West by making use of his acquaintances in the Roman Empire and sending the *Letters* to his friends, pupils, and disciples. In this way, by expounding passages of Scripture, he creates an exegetical science. It must be acknowledged that the exegesis carried out by Jerome fits in with the exegesis practised by other Church Fathers. The *Letters* by Stridonian are accompanied by explanations concerning the literal sense, i.e. the correct understanding of the biblical verses<sup>2</sup> as many contemporaries of the author of the *Vulgate* asked the Monk of Bethlehem for them. There are also prominent passages where Dalmatius interprets the text of Scripture. Jerome had every right to do so, since he had become acquainted with the achievements of both traditions during his travels. It must be given to Jerome that he had every right to do so, since he had become acquainted during his with the achievements of both traditions. Moreover, having lived in Bethlehem for about half of his life,<sup>3</sup> he was free to enjoy the riches of Caesarea Superior.<sup>4</sup> He was educated by teachers representing both traditions who exerted profound influence on his works. Jerome understood very well that the development of Scripture interpretation in the Alexandrian milieu was due to a number of factors. The use of allegory in the interpretation of the Bible allowed for the deepening of the considerations therein, but the most important task was to contain the Gnostics and their preferred mode of biblical exegesis.<sup>5</sup> This tradition combined Christian traditions in Bible interpretation with non-Christian currents, especially Platonic philosophy. In addition, he made use of all available science

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<sup>1</sup> See Paczkowski 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Examples of such explanations can be found in *Letters* of Jerome: 30, 120, 140, see Hieronymus 1910, 243–249; 1912, 473–515; 1918, 269–289.

<sup>3</sup> There is some debate among scholars about the date of Jerome’s birth; see Prosper Aquitanus 1892, IX 451. 469; Grützmacher 1901, 45–50; Cavallera 1922, 3–12; Kelly 1975, 337–339.

<sup>4</sup> On the foundation of the city, see Haefeli, Leo. 1923: 34–38.

<sup>5</sup> See Simonetti 1985, 65–107.

of the time to work on Scripture.<sup>6</sup> The Jewish heritage left by Philo was also of paramount importance.<sup>7</sup> The scholarly approach to the Bible was to apply these techniques in order to bring out the deepest sense of in the Bible. It must also be added that this tradition contributed to a significant Christological revival at the end of the third and beginning of the fourth century.<sup>8</sup> Jerome became acquainted with this exegesis at a time when the method created by this tradition was already worked out and developed. The monk of Bethlehem was therefore able to benefit unhindered from its fruits, also thanks to the friendships he had made with representatives of this method.

Stridonian also spent part of his life in or around Antioch. He therefore had the opportunity to become familiar with the ways of interpreting the biblical text developed by the second tradition. It explained any biblical difficulty not by allegory but by other means, such as, adapting to the intellectual level of the audience, clarifying the text commenting on the Bible by rhetorical means, attending to the basic level of the text, utilizing history and archaeology. This tradition, despite its many internal differences, believed that allegory was not an appropriate tool for interpreting Scripture. However, the representatives of this direction were able to see the spiritual realm in the biblical text alongside the historical facts that appear in it. These two bases, historical fact and spiritual meaning, had to coexist in the text. This is also how they should be grasped, although in different ways.<sup>9</sup> All this led to a different approach in the interpretation of the biblical text that had to follow the letter of the sacred text faithfully. On the basis of the *Letters*, it must be acknowledged that Jerome was able to skilfully select the most orthodox content from one tradition and the other, thus contributing not only to the orthodoxy of the faith, but also to the performance of optimal exegesis. All this makes his exegetical teaching extremely profound and characterised by a particular focus and reference to Christ.

The exegesis of the Bible from a Christocentric angle is particularly evident through Jerome's use of the methods of interpretation developed by the Church Fathers.<sup>10</sup> Thus, a typological interpretation, a prosopological interpretation and

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<sup>6</sup> See Fürst 2011, 15–16.

<sup>7</sup> See Szram 2012, 659–665; Sterling 2017, 163–166; on the sources from which the Jewish diaspora in Alexandria drew; Niehoff 2011, 152–187.

<sup>8</sup> See Kelly 1985, 153–158.

<sup>9</sup> See Lubac 1947, 105–113; Grant 1957, 105–113.

<sup>10</sup> For more of Jerome's exegesis; see Jay 2004, 1094–1133.

an allegorical interpretation appear in the texts of the Stridonian. In the *Letters* we find the following interpretations in which the Monk of Bethlehem applies uses the methods mentioned above.

As far as typological interpretation is concerned, Stridonian uses the following examples. In *Letter 73*, Jerome calls Melchizedek a type of Christ.<sup>11</sup> The attitude of King Shalem is seen as a type of the Church of Christ. Additionally, Stridonian observes two facts about Melchizedek which are missing in the biblical account, namely the lack of his genealogy, which is mentioned only during his encounter with Abraham, and no record of his death. He explains this event by the eternity of Christ and His Church. In this way, Christ's priesthood has no end. Following the example of Melchizedek, He is both the and priest for ever.<sup>12</sup> In a similar way, Jerome identifies the figure of Melchizedek with Christ in his exegesis of the Letter to the Hebrews (see Heb 5:6). Melchizedek represents a type of Christ in that he is also a priest and king. The bread and wine for Melchizedek's sacrifice are seen as a foreshadowing of Christ's sacrifice. Jerome builds bases his reflections on Psalm 110 (Ps 110:4). Melchizedek, although anointed only with the oil of joy and purity of faith represents the Aaronic priesthood, since he does not offer a blood sacrifice, but bread and wine. They signify the very sacrament of Christ and are seen as a foreshadowing of his sacrifice. The Stridonian therefore sees Melchizedek as representative of Christ's priesthood. The king of Shalem is thus not an image, an angel, or the Holy Spirit, but a figure, a type of Christ himself.<sup>13</sup>

Jerome identifies figures of Christ in other passages in the *Letters*. Apart from the figure of Melchisedec, he compares Moses who led the Israelites out of the land of Egypt to Christ who leads Christians out of the bondage of sin. Furthermore, Jerome juxtaposes the meekness of Moses (see Lev 12:3) with the meekness of Christ (see Matt 11:28)<sup>14</sup> and recognises in the arms extended by Moses during the battle with the Amalekites (see Ex 17:8–16) the arms extended by Christ on the cross.<sup>15</sup> Describing Elisha's miracles in connection with the cleansing of the waters of Jericho (see 2 Kgs 2:19) and the priests' crossing the riverbed with dry feet at the command of Elisha and Elijah (see 2 Kgs 2:8),

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<sup>11</sup> See Hieronymus 1912, 16–17.

<sup>12</sup> See Hieronymus 1912, 13–23.

<sup>13</sup> See Hieronymus 1912, 21–22.

<sup>14</sup> See Hieronymus 1918, 162–164.

<sup>15</sup> See Hieronymus 1912, 61–62.

Stridonian observes several similarities with the baptism of Jesus and the cleansing of the entire human race in this way.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, the reign of Solomon (see 1 Kgs 3:7) is compared to the peace of Christ and His reign in the last days.<sup>17</sup>

Analysing especially the exegesis of the Psalms made in the *Letters*, one can notice Jerome's use of prosopology.<sup>18</sup> The interpretation of Psalm 2 is a fine example here where the influence of Origen is evident,<sup>19</sup> but Jerome's own references are also noticeable gaining an additional strength. Through it, Stridonian draws attention to the unity of the Godhead and humanity in Christ, thus denouncing the heresy of the Apollinarians, which was extremely alive in his time. Moreover, he explores other Christological themes. Relying on this interpretation, he concludes that the Saviour is the main character of the Psalms. It is on Him that the interpretation of the Stridonian in this book is based.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, the Monk of Bethlehem shows the relationship between the Father and the Son, which can only be attained by faith.<sup>21</sup> Letter 65 which may be defined as a song in praise of Christ contains a greeting to the ruler on his wedding day pointing to its messianic significance following the interpretation based on Jewish exegesis. Jerome relates it entirely to Christ and the Church, including in his reflections the praise of virginity.<sup>22</sup>

Jerome uses a similar explanation when interpreting Psalm 117.<sup>23</sup> He relates it in its entirety to Christ, who, coming from the lineage of David, came to save Israel as the promised Messiah. This Monk of Bethlehem also uses this psalm to demonstrate the meaning of the word *Hosanna*.<sup>24</sup> When the scribes and Pharisees were outraged at this behaviour of the crowd, Christ himself related the prophecy from this Psalm to himself and additionally responded with a quotation from Psalm 8 (Ps 8:3). The Psalms mentioned thus serve the Stridonian to show that the word *Hosanna* should not be translated into another language. It refers to

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<sup>16</sup> See Hieronymus 1912, 195–196.

<sup>17</sup> See Hieronymus 1912, 24.

<sup>18</sup> See Perrone 1999, 379.

<sup>19</sup> See Origenes 1978, 1, 2; 2, 6.

<sup>20</sup> See Paczkowski 2005, 170–172.

<sup>21</sup> See Hieronymus 1910, 631–632.

<sup>22</sup> See Hieronymus 1910, 616–647; Nigro 2019, 139–156.

<sup>23</sup> See Hieronymus 1910, 107–110.

<sup>24</sup> See Hieronymus 1910, 108: „De verbo autem *osianna*, quia in Graecum non poterant transferre sermonem, sicut *alleluia*, et in *amen*, et in plerisque factum videmus, ipsum Hebraeum posuerunt, dicentes, *osianna*”.

Christ, whom the people addressed both before the Passion and to the angel after His birth (see Matt 21:9; Mark 11:9–10). It also reveals His special mission of bringing peace to earth and heaven.<sup>25</sup>

Isaiah 42:1 confirms the Christocentric conclusions which have been reached so far. The Stridonian interprets the beginning of chapter 42 of the aforementioned book in order to demonstrate its correct translation. After clearing up any doubts about the correct translation, the Monk of Bethlehem makes a prosopological interpretation when God the Father speaks of the Servant in the third person and when he mentions sending his Spirit upon him. He also interprets the Genesis passage in the same way (see Gen 1:26). It is worth adding that the plural used in the phrase concerning the Man testifies, according to the Monk of Bethlehem, to the three Divine Persons. Further, Jerome states that in the representation of the Person the unity of the Godhead and the equality of the Persons is implicit.<sup>26</sup>

It is certainly worth emphasising that the exegesis of the Christocentric passages discussed is prosopological. Based on this, Jerome emphasises the fact of the eternal begetting of the Son, being in opposition to the heresies proclaiming this event but adopting it after Jesus' coming to earth (adoptionism), although it should be noted that this particular heresy is not mentioned by Jerome in his *Letters*.

The allegorical interpretation made by the Monk of Bethlehem in the *Letters* should also be presented. Stridonian's discussion of the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32) culminates in his own allegorical exegesis, in which he emphasises that the interpreted text concerns both pagans and all sinners. In it, Christ is presented as the Mediator who has brought peace to mankind. The value of His mercy and the gratuitousness of salvation is particularly emphasised. Stridonian also discusses the significance of the Incarnation and Christ's assumption of human flesh:

But what greater mercy can there be than that the Son of God was born as a son of man? That for ten months He endured tribulation? That He awaited the coming of

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<sup>25</sup> See Hieronymus 1910, 108–110.

<sup>26</sup> See Hieronymus 1910, 101: „Sicut enim in Genesi dicitur: «Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram» (Gen 1, 26); ita et hic puto dictum, et quis ibi nobis? Nobis autem quibus aliis aestimandum est, nisi Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto, quibus vadit quicumque eorum obsequitur voluntati? Et in eo quidem quod unius loquentis persona proponitur, divinitatis est unitas. In eo vero quod dicitur, nobis, personarum diversitas indicatur?»

childbirth? That He was wrapped in nappies? That he was subject to his parents? That he grew through the various periods of his life? And having endured verbal abuse, slaps and blows, He also became cursed for us by being crucified on the cross to free us from the curse of the Law (see Gal 3:13). He became obedient to the Father to the point of death (see Phil 2:8) in order to fulfil by deed what he had asked before as a mediator by saying: “Father, I want that as I and you are one, so they also may be one in us” (John 17:21).<sup>27</sup>

In the above biblical exegesis, Jerome once again emphasises the importance of allegorical interpretation. It should be noted that Stridonian closely follows Origen in his reflections. However, there are instances where he rejects Adamantius’ interpretation and brings out an interpretation of his own. When Alexandrian sees in the two Seraphim (see Isa 6:1–13) an allegory of the Son and the Holy Spirit, Jerome replaces it with the symbolism of the two Testaments. No detail is omitted by him and the style is characterised by elegance. The exegesis is carried out extensively. First, the author of the *Vulgate* establishes the literal meaning of the text, then he gives a symbolic interpretation, rarely applying a moral approach. One can see Stridonian’s extensive biblical knowledge and his almost constant reference to predecessors, not least Origen. By the sheer number of questions posed, Jerome builds up his image as a biblical scholar. This is also evidenced by the comparisons of text occurring in various books of Scripture. These demonstrate the extraordinary dexterity of the Stridonian. Jerome does not shy away from presenting his own opinion and then deriving an independent judgement. The second part of the first letter (*Letter 18 B*), which is of more technical nature, differs somewhat from the earlier reflections of the author of the *Vulgate*. In addition to comparing the various Greek translations, Jerome also adds some exegetical explanations. It is noteworthy that already in these *Letters* one can notice Jerome’s emphasis on the meaning of the Hebrew words, which would then in his mature exegesis consist in taking into account the two sources of translation, the Hebrew and the *Septuagint*. This is certainly

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<sup>27</sup> Hieronymus 1910, 114: „Quae autem maior potest esse clementia, quam ut Filius Dei, hominis Filius nasceretur? Decem mensium fastidia sustineret? Partus expectaret adventum? Involveretur pannis? Subiiceretur parentibus? Per singulas adoleret aetates? Et post contumelias vocum, alapas et flagella, crucis quoque pro nobis fieret maledictum, ut nos a maledicto Legis absolveret (see Gal 3, 13), Patri factus obediens usque ad mortem (see Fil 2, 8): et id opere completeret, quod ante ex persona mediatoris fuerat deprecatus, dicens: «Pater volo, ut quomodo ego et tu unum sumus, ita et isti in nobis unum sint» (Gv 17, 21)”.

an important step in the approach to Bible study, but it is only an interim step. The *veritas hebraica* approach to the Bible still has to wait.

*Letters* 18 and 21 demonstrate the most characteristic principles of Stridonian exegesis. St. Jerome himself observes the following pattern: “There are not, as some think, simple words in the Writings; there is very much hidden meaning in them. For there is a different expressive sense and a different spiritual sense”<sup>28</sup> and: “[...] in ecclesiastical things one must seek not words but meaning, that is, one must feed on bread and not on pods (see Luke 15:16–17)”<sup>29</sup> The above quotations demonstrate the preference for allegorical over literal interpretation. They also substantiate the point that answers the question of why Jerome was guided in his exegesis to show the allegorical and spiritual sense rather than the literal one. Stridonian publicly advocated these principles until the outbreak of the controversy related to Origen, which must be dated between 393 and 404.<sup>30</sup>

A similar theme concerning the Church is contained in *Letter* 74. Interpreting Solomon’s resolution of the two women (see 1 Kgs 3:16–28), Jerome makes a comparison between the Church and the synagogue. He believes that it should be understood allegorically and thus personifies the figure of Solomon with the Saviour. In doing so, he makes a connection between Christ and the Church pointing to the role of the sheepfold of Christ. The two women in the story of Solomon symbolise, according to Stridonian, the Church, which is composed of Gentiles and the Jewish synagogue bearing, however, one identity. The Monk from Bethlehem is also convinced that the Church existed before the creation of the world in God’s eternal design. It was created centuries ago for the purpose of fulfilling the plan of man’s salvation through Jesus. Its role is to point to Christ and to proclaim Him among all peoples. This is a task that the Church should proclaim until the end of this world. In his reflections, the author of the *Vulgate* persistently encourages the rejection of the fulfilment of the Jewish law, which seems to be a clear suggestion against all Judaizers. The polemic against them was an important point of consideration for the Church in the teaching of the author of the *Vulgate*. It is the Church, not Jewish law, that is the fulfilment of Christ’s commands. Jerome also emphasises that it is the Saviour who is the overarching

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<sup>28</sup> Hieronymus 1910, 88: „Non sunt, ut quidam putant, in Scripturis verba simplicia, plurimum in his absconditum est. Aliud littera, aliud mysticus sermo significat”.

<sup>29</sup> Hieronymus 1910, 142: „[...] in ecclesiasticis rebus non quaerantur verba, sed sensus, id est, panibus sit vita sustentanda, non siliquis”; see Kritzingner 2019, 1–7.

<sup>30</sup> See Cavallera 1922, 121–127.



purpose of the Church, whereas the role of the sheepfold of Christ is to lead people to salvation.<sup>31</sup> In Stridonian's reflections on the Church, then, one can see the connection with Christ on which the Monk of Bethlehem builds his ecclesiological reflections. For him, the Church is the work of the Saviour himself.<sup>32</sup> The reason for such an intimate union between Christ and the Church is the Saviour's love. It is not surprising, then, that the author of the *Vulgate* describes the Church as a queen who reigns together with her King. There is a fullness of virtue in her, which is why it is so important for the Christian to abide in the faith, because it leads to eternity, it is: "[...] the dove one, perfect, closest, stands at the right hand and contains nothing perverse".<sup>33</sup>

It is extremely interesting to note that there is not only an allegorical interpretation in the *Letters*, but also an allegory concerning eschatology. This is illustrated by the allegory equating the Promised Land with heaven which also appears in *Letter 129*. The *Letter* furthermore links heaven with the dwelling place of Christ. In his reflections on sacred places, Jerome also draws a very important spiritual image of the Holy Land. He points out that the true Promised Land is linked to heaven and it is worth doing everything to get there. It is the heavenly land of the living promised in the Gospel to the meek (see Matt 5:4).<sup>34</sup> At the same time, however, he draws attention to the value and importance of the Holy Land, since it is linked not only to Christ but also to the Patriarchs and is a precious testimony of the faith. This theme is repeatedly addressed in the pages of the Bible. However, when looking at the Holy Land and making a pilgrimage to it, one should remember to see the wars, the ruins, to expect the real Canaan, that is, heaven.<sup>35</sup> Thus, it is worth imagining the spiritual picture of the places associated with Jesus, as well as the eschatological perspective that Stridonian foreshadows by using the material significance of the holy places. However, Jerome was very sensitive to incorrect interpretations of Scripture especially when it came to reducing its meaning to materialistic ideas,<sup>36</sup> which explains his vehement opposition to millenarian interpretations.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>31</sup> See Hieronymus 1912, 28–29.

<sup>32</sup> See Hieronymus 1910, 283–285.

<sup>33</sup> Hieronymus 1910, 637: „[...] una columba, perfecta et proxima stat a dextris, et nihil in se sinistrum habet”.

<sup>34</sup> See Hieronymus 1918, 162–164.

<sup>35</sup> See Hieronymus 1918, 164–173.

<sup>36</sup> See Paczkowski 2020, 346–354.

<sup>37</sup> See Simonetti 2008, 3280–3282.

The theme of rebuilding Jerusalem also appears in the *Letters*. The Promised Land, which is heaven, belongs to those who practice asceticism on earth.<sup>38</sup> Thus, one can clearly see the link between the present life and the prospect of heaven. Stridonian also opposes the desires of Judaizers,<sup>39</sup> such as Nazarenes and Ebionites, and thus having little in common with Rabbinic Judaism, who believed that Jerusalem would one day be rebuilt.<sup>40</sup> He believes that apocalyptic texts that speak of the rebuilding of the Holy City should be interpreted allegorically.<sup>41</sup> The Holy Land is the land of promise,<sup>42</sup> which was not always a Jewish city.<sup>43</sup> The political situation of Jerusalem after its capture by the Romans fitted into this explanation of Jerome. The above passage shows the polemic of the Monk of Bethlehem with elements of exegesis. It stemmed from the fact that in the time of the Great Doctor of the Church, one form of millenarianism was Judaic.<sup>44</sup> The emphasis on the spiritual translation of the meaning of the Holy City indicates how important it was to recall the correct exegesis. Jerome criticises the literal exegesis that speaks of an eternal dwelling in Jerusalem.<sup>45</sup> Thus, it is not about earthly habitation or the rebuilding of the Holy City in its former place, but about Jerusalem in the spiritual sense, i.e. heaven. In this way, the Monk of Bethlehem opposes the assumptions of millenarianism. Instead, he preaches the necessity of staying with Christ in order to see God. This concept applies not to an individual human being, but to the whole of humanity.<sup>46</sup> In this way, Jerome evokes the spiritual tradition of Christianity by drawing inspiration from Origen and Eusebius of Caesarea,<sup>47</sup> who described the Christian vision of Jerusalem. He enriches it, moreover, with a vision of the hope to be gained by those who choose Christ in their lives. Thus, Jerome is clearly in opposition to those preaching materialist eschatological concepts. In his view, the biblical passages that speak of the rebuilding of Jerusalem should be explained spiritually. It should also be emphasised that the Monk of Bethlehem often speaks of the splendour

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<sup>38</sup> See Hieronymus 1910, 304–305; Margarino 2010, 231–249.

<sup>39</sup> See Kinzig 2003, 409–429.

<sup>40</sup> See Newman 2001, 421–422.

<sup>41</sup> See Hieronymus 1910, 543–544.

<sup>42</sup> See Hieronymus 1918, 162–164.

<sup>43</sup> See Hieronymus 1918, 173.

<sup>44</sup> See O'Connell 1948, 66.

<sup>45</sup> See Hieronymus 1910, 354–355.

<sup>46</sup> See Hieronymus 1912, 479–481.

<sup>47</sup> See Eusebius 1904.

of the earthly city but does so only in the context of directing encouragement to those wishing to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.<sup>48</sup>

Another example of an allegorical interpretation in an eschatological spirit is Psalm 110. In it, Stridonian emphasises the fact of Christ being at the right hand of God (Ps 110:1).<sup>49</sup> In this way, he discusses Christ's eternal reign<sup>50</sup> in heaven and His second coming in glory and His judgment of mankind.<sup>51</sup> The author of the *Vulgate* also points to Christians who, by choosing the Christian faith on earth, will share in reigning with the Saviour in His eternal glory. This psalm was clearly commented on by the Monk of Bethlehem in the context of the relationship between the Father and the Son. However, one can find in it a clear sign of an eschatological interpretation concerning the reign of Christ and the participation in His glory of those who, through life on earth combined with faith in Jesus, have chosen Him in their everyday life.

In conclusion, it must be said that the interpretations studied by Jerome helped him to find a proper relationship with Christ and then contributed to the formation of a proper Christocentric doctrine. The use of the allegorical method also allowed the Monk of Bethlehem to see the Christological depth and to combine it with eschatology. This symbiosis, in turn, served him to portray the doctrine of Christ as complete and thus answering the most fundamental questions concerning man. From the analysis of the letter comes a conclusion concerning the interpretation of Scripture. It is not to be interpreted on one's own, because this is how errors and heresies are born. The consideration of the Bible should always be in accordance with the spirit of the Church, supported by the authority of those who have dedicated themselves to this task. God's word cannot be freely interpreted. There is a tradition in the Church in interpreting the Sacred Scriptures and this must be respected. This theme reverberates extremely strongly in the Stridonian *Letters*. Finally, the exegesis of Jerome presented in the text fits in with the exegesis practised by other Church Fathers and contributed significantly to the development of Christology and eschatology.

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<sup>48</sup> See Hieronymus 1910, 329–344; 1910, 527–541; 1912, 306–351; 1918, 162–175; 1918, 312–328.

<sup>49</sup> See Hieronymus 1912, 492–500.

<sup>50</sup> See Hieronymus 1910, 593–595.

<sup>51</sup> See Hieronymus 1912, 384–385.

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