

Adam KubiśThe John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin
ORCID: 0000-0003-4961-2254**“I delight in love, not in sacrifice”: Hosea 6:6 and Its
Rereading in the Gospel of Matthew¹**

Abstract: The first part of the article deals with four different understandings of Hosea 6:6 in the context of that entire book: (1) the repudiation of the cult as such; (2) the rejection of a particular *notion* of cult; (3) the priority of ethics *over* the cult; and (4) the symbiosis of cult *and* ethics, i.e. that an authentic cult interweaves ethical values and proper ritual conduct. The author concludes that the fourth interpretation best fits the message of the Book of Hosea. The second part of the article deals with the problem of the textual *Vorlage* which would have been used by Matthew. He seems to have quoted the Hebrew text in a way that remains faithful to his contemporary hermeneutical rule, according to which each element of a biblical parallelism was to be interpreted separately, based on the belief that every single line carried equal weight and conveyed a new truth or a new law. The Matthean rereading of Hosea 6:6, the focus of the third part, is presented from two perspectives: the synchronic and the diachronic. In the synchronic presentation, the main point of concern is the contribution of the quotes in 9:13 and 12:7 to the understanding of those Matthean pericopes. Finally, the diachronic reading deals with the Matthean use of Hosea 6:6 within the context of the Matthean community and its dialogue with the Rabbinic Judaism of that day.

Keywords: Hosea 6:6; Matt 9:13; Matt 12:7; חֶסֶד / *hesed*, ἔλεος, love, mercy, Sabbath

The text by the Prophet Hosea “I delight in חֶסֶד (*hesed*), not in sacrifice” (6:6) is the only Old Testament passage cited twice

¹ This article is a revised and updated version of my previous study published in Polish: Adam Kubiś, “«Miłości pragnę, nie krwawej ofiary». Relektura Oz 6,6 w Ewangelii według św. Mateusza,” *Collectanea Theologica* 86 (2016) no. 4, 103–24. Translated from Polish by Lingua Lab.

in the Gospel of Matthew (9:13; 12:7).² Both of the Matthean pericopes that include the citation, i.e. the narrative of the Calling of Matthew (9:9–13) and of the controversy surrounding the plucking of heads of grain on the Sabbath (12:1–8), are paralleled in the two other Synoptic Gospels (Matt 9:9–13 / Mark 2:13–17 / Luke 5:27–32, and Matt 12:1–8 / Mark 2:23–28 / Luke 6:1–5). However—rather surprisingly—the analogous texts in Mark and Luke do not refer to Hos 6:6. The editorial nature of the quotation from Hosea in Matt clearly indicates the text’s unique role in Matthean theology. In this article, I will first present the meaning of the sentence in question within the context of Hosea’s work. Then, I will attempt to answer the question of the text form (*Vorlage*) behind Matthew’s citation. In the final section, I will focus on the theological message of Hos 6:6 in its new context in the Gospel of Matthew.

1. Hos 6:6 in the Context of the Book of Hosea

The grammar of Biblical Hebrew allows for two translations of Hos 6:6. The first of those is: “For I desire love and not sacrifice, and a knowledge of God and not burnt offerings.” In this translation, the second verse, which literally means “a knowledge of God more than burnt offerings” (with the comparative preposition *מִן* *min*), is interpreted in light of the first one, which includes the negative form *אֵל* (*lō’*) and literally means: “love I desire and not sacrifice.”³ From

² Commentators translate the lexeme *חַסֵּד* in Hos 6:6 in a variety of ways, such as “love”, “mercy”, “loyalty”, “steadfast love”, “covenant attitude”, “goodness”, or “dedication”. The rich and complex semantics of this Hebrew word, likewise in connection with Hos 6:6, has been elucidated in a recent study by C. Ziegert, “What is *חַסֵּד*? A Frame-semantic Approach”, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 44/4 (2020): 711–32. According to Ziegert’s definition, *חַסֵּד* turns out to be an action or an event rather than an attitude. Thus, its semantics is described (726) as “an action performed by one person for the benefit of another to avert some danger or critical impairment from the beneficiary.”

³ For instance “For faithful love is what pleases me, not sacrifice; knowledge of God, not burnt offerings” (NJB). See H.F.W. Gesenius’ *Hebrew Grammar*, eds. E. Kautzsch and A.E. Cowley, (Oxford: Clarendon 1910), §119w; B.K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*

the grammar standpoint, another reading is possible, in which the negation in the first verse is taken comparatively, in light of the preposition *min* in the second verse: "For I desire love more than sacrifice, the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings."⁴ This translation is attested to by medieval Jewish exegetes, with Rashi leading the way.⁵ Thus, the first translation speaks of the rejection of all offerings, whereas the second of the priority of love over offerings.⁶ Hebrew syntax does not provide an unequivocal indication as to which of the above interpretations is the correct one. Therefore, the choice of an appropriate reading of Hos 6:6 should be

(Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns 1990), 266, §14.4e: "For . . . I desire . . . acknowledgment of God, not 'ōlt."

⁴ For instance "For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, and in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings" (NAS). In this case, the negation לֹא (*lō'*) ought to be understood as "a dialectical negation" (a term coined by H. Kruse) or "improper negation" (*negationis improprietas* after J. Gussetius) found, among other places, in Exod 16:8; Ps 44:4, and Prov 8:10. The negation of that type, when featured in the first section of a sentence or in the first subordinate clause, ought to be interpreted in light of the second section or clause, contrary in its meaning to that of the first section or clause. Such an initial negation has a limited, relative, or—as H. Kruse phrased it—"dialectical" value. See H. Kruse, "Die 'Dialektische Negation' als semitisches Idiom," *Vetus Testamentum* 4 (1954): 385–400; J. Gussetius (Gousset), *Commentarii linguae ebraicae* (Amsterdam: H. & T. Boom 1702), 422.

⁵ See M. Millard, "Denn Liebe mag ich, aber nicht Schlachtopfer". *Hos 6,6 im Zusammenhang der schöpfungstheologischen Interpretation von Hos 6,7 ff* (Salzburger exegetisch-theologische Vorträge 3; Münster: Lit 2004), 35–70; M. Millard, "Osée 6,6 dans l'histoire de l'interprétation juive," "Car c'est l'amour qui me plaît, non le sacrifice..." *Recherches sur Osée 6:6 et son interprétation juive et chrétienne*, ed. E. Bons, (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 88; Leiden: Brill 2004), 139–44.

⁶ Some translators and commentators opt for a very literal translation. In this case, however, the reader faces a certain logical inconsistency: God desires love and knowledge, but he rejects sacrifice, nevertheless tolerating some burnt offerings. See for instance "For I desire steadfast love not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings" (ESV); "For it is loyalty that I desire, not sacrifice, and knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings" (NAB); J.L. Mays, *Hosea. A Commentary* (The Old Testament Library; Philadelphia, PA: Westminster 1976), 86: "that I desire devotion, not sacrifice, the knowledge of God, rather than burnt offerings." D. Stuart, *Hosea – Jonah* (Word Biblical Commentary 31; Waco, TX: Word Books 1987), 98: "For I am pleased by loyalty – not sacrifice, and knowing God rather than burnt offerings."

sought for by establishing the congruence of a given translation with the context of the book.

Within the interpretative tradition, the text of Hos 6:6 has been understood in two ways, reflecting the two possible translation; hence, as (a) an unconditional repudiation of animal sacrifice and cultic ritual or (b) the relativisation of the sacrificial cult.⁷ However, one may attempt to develop a more precise typology of the interpretations of Hos 6:6 and identify four possible elucidations:

1. The first interpretation reads Hos 6:6 as a complete repudiation of the cult.⁸ Some commentators are of the opinion that the classical prophets had rejected the cult⁹, meaning that Hosea and other pre-exilic prophets as Amos (e.g., 5:21–24), Micah (e.g., 6:6–8), Isaiah (e.g., 1:10–17) and Jeremiah (e.g., 6:19–21), are all considered to have been antiritualists, who were only concerned with ethics.¹⁰ On this assumption, commentators interpret Hos 6:6, underscoring the difference between: (a) the gift of self and the gift of an object, i.e. the offering¹¹, (b) the internal attitude (morality and the true religion of the heart) and the attitude of external religious practice, i.e. the sacrificial cult¹², (c) the genuine adherence to God and the mere performance of deeds¹³, (d) a living relationship with God and a mechanical or

⁷ These two interpretations are singled out by E. Bons, “Osée 6:6 dans le texte massorétique,” “*Car c’est l’amour qui me plaît, non le sacrifice...*” *Recherches sur Osée 6:6 et son interprétation juive et chrétienne*, ed. E. Bons, (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 88; Leiden: Brill 2004), 9–24.

⁸ See W. Rudolph, *Hosea* (Kommentar zum Alten Testament 13/1; Gütersloh: Mohn 1966), 140: “Jahwe will keine Opfer.”

⁹ T.V. Lafferty, *The Prophetic Critique of the Priority of the Cult: A Study of Amos 5:21-24 and Isaiah 1:10-17* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick 2012) cites thirty two texts illustrating the prophetic criticism of the cult.

¹⁰ For instance R. Hendel, “Away from Ritual: The Prophetic Critique,” *Social Theory and the Study of Israelite Religion: Essays in Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. S.M. Olyan, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature 2012), 69.

¹¹ W. Nowack, *Die kleinen Propheten übersetzt und erklärt* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1897), 43.

¹² E. Sellin, *Das Zwölfprophetenbuch übersetzt und erklärt* (Berlin: Deichert 1922), 53.

¹³ H.W. Wolff, *Hosea* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag ³1976), 154.

automatic bond between the offering and God's benevolence.¹⁴ Hos 5:6 is often quoted as a corroboration of the above interpretation: "They will go with their flocks and herds to seek the Lord, but they will not find him; he has withdrawn from them." The said explanation may have stemmed from the belief held by Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918) of the evolutionary development of the religion of Israel, which posits the opposition between the more advanced form of piety advocated by the prophets (the religion of the spirit and ethics) and the more primitive in its content form, condemned by the prophets and associated with priests, the temple, offerings and other ceremonies (the religion of a stagnant cult). Wellhausen's condemnation of the priests and of the cult, alongside his admiration for the prophets, their spirit and ethics, had a bearing on the subsequent interpretations of Hos 6:6.¹⁵ The proponents of the anti-cultic reading could also refer to Martin Luther, who, commenting on Hos 6:6, unconditionally rejected all offerings: *abrogat uno verbo omnes ceremonias*.¹⁶ In his interpretation of Hos 6:6, Luther refers to his own commentary to Isa 1:11, in light of which the Israelites of the period (much like his contemporary "Papists") perceived offerings as *opera operata*, believing in

¹⁴ J. Jeremias, *Der Prophet Hosea* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1983), 88; D. Stuart, *Hosea*, 110. The four examples above, as indicated by Bons, "Osée 6,6," 14.

¹⁵ J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels* (Berlin: Georg Reimer 1899). For instance (58): "Hosea führt 4,6 ss. bittere Klage darüber, dass die Priester statt der Thora die Opfer kultiviren." Hosea is presented as an opponent of the priesthood and the priestly religion by: J.M. Ward, *Hosea. A Theological Commentary* (New York: Harper and Row 1966); H.W. Wollf, *Hosea*; H. Utzschneider, *Hosea Prophet vor dem Ende: Zum Verhältnis von Geschichte und Institution in der alttestamentlichen Prophetie* (OBO 31: Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1980); D. Stuart, *Hosea*.

¹⁶ *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe (Weimarer Ausgabe)* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger – Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt 1966), XIII, 28.

the justification received by simply performing them.¹⁷ Among other contemporary ideological assumptions that may have served as the basis for the interpretation rejecting any form of cult in Hos 6:6, Eberhard Bons lists also the understanding of the cult as a reality expressive of an external, customary, superficial, and trivial activity, one that does not involve the emotions, reason, and will of the giver of the offering.¹⁸ Another ideological tenet, according to Ina Willi-Plein, is the understanding of offering as a realisation of the *do ut des* principle (“I give in order that you may give”), transforming it into a mechanical means by which man wants to pressurise the divinity for the purpose of receiving the grace of blessing.¹⁹ The above anti-cultic interpretation of Hos 6:6 has now been dismissed by most commentators, for the cult had always been the fundamental indicator of the identity of Biblical Israel, including the Israel of the prophetic era. Thus, the anti-cultic reading of Hos 6:6 had resulted from reading the ideological biases of contemporary commentators into a text dating back to eight century B.C.

2. Another possible interpretation of Hos 6:6 is a contention that the prophet did not dismiss the cult as such, but a very specific understanding thereof. It was already Ernst Würthwein who put forth the hypothesis, claiming that the prophetic criticism of cult did not pertain to the cult in general, but to a particular type of offerings or rites,

¹⁷ D. Martin Luhters Werke. *Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger 1902), XXV, 93: *Non quod per se mala sint sacrificia, erant enim divinitus instituta, sed quod opinio, qua illi sacrificabant, esset impia: abiecta enim fiducia in misericordiam Dei iustificari se tanquam ex opere operato sacrificiis credebant, id quod hodie etiam in Papistis nostris reprehendimus.*

¹⁸ Bons, “Osée 6,6,” 15.

¹⁹ I. Willi-Plein, *Opfer und Kult im alttestamentlichen Israel. Textbefragungen und Zwischenergebnisse* (Stuttgarter Biblestudien 153; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk 1993), 28.

a particular situation or practice.²⁰ Consequently, several potential readings of Hos 6:6 have been proposed in line with that belief.

- a. Some scholars claim that the prophets only criticised a politicised cult, with the actual target of their criticism being the corrupt political establishment, that used the cult instrumentally in order to legitimise their own authority.²¹ Critics of the above interpretation accuse it of imposing contemporary sensitivity and contexts (such as, for instance, neo-Marxist theory of religion) onto the Hosean text, ignoring the genuine message it conveys.²² In fact, not all instances of the prophetic criticism of cult feature the political aspect. For instance, Amos 2:6–8 speaks of impropriety of sacrificing stolen animals.
- b. Referring to the very same passage in Amos 2:6–8, Jonathan Klawans argues that the prophetic critique of the cult stemmed from the violation of the property rights. The stolen goods cannot be offered in an act of sacrifice. What provokes the prophet's intervention is, therefore, the lack of ethical attitude of those making offerings.²³ Limiting himself to

²⁰ E. Würhwein, "Kultpolemik oder Kultbescheid? Beobachtungen zu dem Thema 'Prophetic und Kult'," *Tradition und Situation. Studien zur alttestamentlichen Prophetie. FS für A. Weiser*, eds. O. Kaiser and E. Würhwein, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1963), 115–31.

²¹ See J. Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox 1996), 80–1: "The idea of anyone in eighth century B.C.E. Israel rejecting worship as such in favor of a purely spiritual and ethical religion is, however, quite implausible. Rather, the point seems to be that worship was (as it still is) a very powerful way of legitimating the current political and social status quo"; R. Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period* (Old Testament Library; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1994), I, 171.

²² R. Hendel, "Away from Ritual: The Prophetic Critique," 59–79.

²³ J. Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple: Symbolism and Supersessionism in the Study of Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2006), 87: "it is important to note that a number of classic statements erroneously taken as 'rejections of sacrifice' are in context juxtaposed with expressions of concern over the economic exploitation of the poor (Amos 5:23 is preceded by Amos 5:10–11;

commenting the work by Amos, J. Klawans does not extend his thesis to cover the text by Hosea. However, as it will have been demonstrated in this paper (see the fourth potential interpretation of Hos 6:6), Klawans' interpretation can shed some light on the proper interpretation of Hos 6:6.

- c. Hosea may have been opposing a syncretic cult. In the book, we can recognise direct references to adulterating Yahwism with Baalism (9:10; 12:2; 13:1).²⁴ In the case of Hos 6:6, the hypothesis of syncretism does not seem plausible, as the sacrifices

Isa. 1:11-15 is followed by 1:17; Jer. 6:20 is preceded by 6:13). This raises the strong possibility that these passages too can be understood similarly: the prophets' 'rejection' of sacrifice was deeply connected to their belief that Israel was economically rotten to the core. What the foregoing study demonstrates – albeit briefly – is that when it comes to sacrifice, ethics and rituals are intricately and inherently connected. Indeed, when we take the issue of ownership into consideration, the dichotomy between ethics and ritual collapses. The sources surveyed above point to the conclusion that for the Israelite priests, prophets, and court historians, improper ethics render ritual sacrifice ineffectual, not because God doesn't like the idea of sinners atoning through ritual, and not because God would simply prefer to dispense with the ritual in the hope that the people would simply seek righteousness apart from the cult. The objection to sacrifice rests the assumption that God detests the facts of the situation at hand. One who has taken unjustly from the poor cannot properly *give* anything, and therefore the 'sacrifice' offered by such a person is an anathema." At another place (98), Klawans states: "I suggested that many of the prophetic oppositions to sacrifice can be understood as a reflection of their social and economic message. But the prophets did not object, in the abstract, to the idea of sinful people worshiping God. And the (external) ritual is not rejected because of an (interior) ethical wrong. Rather, the prophets – or, at least, some to them – found sacrifice offensive because they believed that those who were offering gifts had themselves stolen them. The concern with property renders it impossible altogether to distinguish between a ritual violation and an ethical wrong. Sacrificing a stolen animal is, at one and the same time, both ethically and ritually wrong."

²⁴ R. Hentschke, *Die Stellung der vorexilischen Schriftpropheten zum Kultus* (Berlin: Töpelmann 1957), 53–5, 90–3. In the same vein, we can regard the book's criticism of the proliferation of altars and sacrifices erected upon the hills (4:13), as well as the condemnation of Gilgal (12:12), and Bethel (4:15; 10:15).

mentioned by Hosea are not intended for Baal, but for YHWH (cf. 3:4; 4:15; 5:6).²⁵

- d. Hosea takes a stand against the cult performed by specifically selected group of priests, who—due to perpetrating evil deeds—are unworthy of making any offerings.²⁶
- e. The hypothesis has been put forth that the reason behind Hosea's critique of the cult is the removal of Hosea himself and his priestly family from performing the very cult. Thus, the criticism would have stemmed from his private motivation.²⁷ This proposal has turned out impossible to be convincingly proven. It was supposed to be corroborated by the interest that Hosea displays in the cult and the priests.

3. The third interpretative possibility for Hos 6:6 is the claim that the prophet opted for the primacy of ethics over the cult, and thus wished to relativise the value of the latter. In light of this opinion, which follows the second reading of Hos 6:6, the prophetic criticism of the cult was not aimed at eliminating the cult and establishing an exclusive domination of ethics. The cult was intended to be continued; however, it was ethics that was to play a role more significant than the

²⁵ F.I. Andersen and D.N. Freedman, *Hosea. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (The Anchor Bible 24; New York, NY: Doubleday 1974), 430.

²⁶ W. Brueggemann, *Tradition for Crisis: A Study in Hosea* (Richmond: John Knox 1968); J.L. Mays, *Hosea* (Old Testament Library; Philadelphia, PA: Westminster 1969); F.I. Andersen and D.N. Freedman, *Hosea*; G.A. Yee, "The Book of Hosea," *The New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. L.E. Keck, (Nashville: Abingdon 1996), VII, 197–297.

²⁷ H.W. Wolff, "Hoseas geistige Heimat," *TLZ* 81 (1956): 83–94; S.L. Cook, "The Lineage Roots of Hosea's Yahwism," *Semeia* 87 (1999): 145–61.

ritual, for God solely expected Israelites to do justice²⁸, be faithful to Him, and retain their knowledge of Him.²⁹

4. The fourth interpretative option has been proposed by Paba Nidhani de Andrado (Curry College, Milton, MA), who suggested that Hosea had been fighting for genuine and authentic cult that was expressed in the symbiosis between rituals and ethics. Within such an approach, both realities—ethics and rituals—are seen by Hosea as mutually intertwined, for it is ethics *with* ritual that constitute the cult proper. For that reason, Hosea called for an appropriate understanding of both rituals and ethics. Thus, he would be counterposing the authentic cult to the inauthentic one, and he understands the latter as a cult that disintegrates the ritual from the moral bearing.³⁰ The thesis is considered to be corroborated by referring to Hosea's admonitions to priests. His message to the priests may be recapitulated as a call for them to teach morality and practice it. Hence, a priest was to teach the דעה (*da'at*) and follow the תורה (*tôrāh*) (4:6). Hosea rebukes priests for their immorality, that is their ignorance of the תורה (*tôrāh*) (4:6; 8:12–13). They are explicitly accused of committing murders (6:9). The people transgress, led by the bad example of priests (4:10–11). Therefore, it is to the people, but indirectly also to the priests, that the prophet addresses his denouncement of breaking the essence of the תורה (*tôrāh*), i.e. the Decalogue, by perpetrating: perjury,

²⁸ Lafferty, *Prophetic Critique*, 84–87, here 84: “what is above all required by Yhwh is doing justice and righteousness.”

²⁹ J.J.M. Roberts, “Hosea and the Sacrificial Cultus,” *Restoration Quarterly* 15 (1972): 26: “covenant loyalty and the knowledge of God which were more important to Yahweh than sacrifice. Indeed, sacrifice was without meaning apart from these.”

³⁰ P.N. de Andrado, “*Hesed* and Sacrifice: The Prophetic Critique in Hosea,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 78 (2016): 47–67, here 48: “I propose that Hosea upholds the ideal of an authentic cult that integrates ritual and ethics, in opposition to (what he deemed to be) false worship that divorces ritual and ethics.” See also M.A. Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets*. I. *Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obodiah, Jonah* (Berit Olam; Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier 2000), 73: “sacrifices offered without the accompanying relationship of loyalty and intimacy with G-d are meaningless.”

lying, murder, theft, adultery, and violence (4:2; cf. 4:9). Hosea believes any ritual to be rejected if it is not accompanied by moral conduct, defined as אֱמֶת ('*ēmet*), דַּעַת (*da'at*), צִדְקָה (*ṣəḏqāh*), as well as genuine חֶסֶד (*hesed*) (see 4:1; 5:4–6; 6:4; 10:12; 12:7). The prophet condemns the improper cult, conducted by priests driven by their greed, their desire for profits (4:8). Such an immoral cult is an equivalent of a false cult, one rejected by God. Besides morality, Hosea's other focus is the adequate performance of rites. He reminds the priests to address their cult solely to the God of Israel and calls for the rejection of the cult of Baal (9:10; 11:2; 13:1), and other idols (3:12.17; 8:4; 11:2), of rituals performed in the mountains (4:13; 10:8; cf. 8:11; 10:1); he condemns the abuse associated with the cultic centres of Bethel (6:10; 10:15), and Gilgal (4:15; 9:15; 12:12). The priests who will not heed the call of the prophet will be relieved of their priestly duties (4:6). The ideal cult is presented by Hosea towards the end of the book, when he speaks of "offering young bulls of our lips," meaning a cult in which besides the slaughter of sacrificial victims, there is also room for the prayer of petition and praise (14:2–3). At this juncture, it must be underscored that Hosea is not an antiritualist, for he considers the lack of offerings to be a deficiency (3:4; 9:4) and mentions their reinstatement (3:4–5; 5:15). Moreover, while berating the greed of the priests preying on the sacrifices, he does not speak against the offerings as such (4:8). Therefore, the text of Hos 6:6, read from the above presented point of view, does not constitute a complete rebuttal of the cult, nor an indication of the priority of ethics over it. The verse is to be understood as a call to return to the authentic form of the cult. The rite, referred to as זֶבַח (*zeḇaḥ*) and עֹלָה ('*olāh*), is to be reintegrated with ethical bearing, defined by the two terms of דַּעַת (*da'at*) and חֶסֶד (*hesed*).³¹

³¹ P.N. de Andrado, "Hesed and Sacrifice," 65–6: "This verse underscores the importance that Hosea places on ethical values within the cult. Far from

Summarising the four potential explanations of Hos 6:6 discussed above, it should be underscored, following John J. Schmitt, that no-one in ancient Israel would be able to imagine a cult with no external rituals. Especially before the experience of the Babylonian captivity, there was not a person who could claim that God did not want the cult to be performed at the temple.³² In spite of that rather obvious observation, oftentimes even the leading scholars in prophetic literature suggest there is a dichotomy within the *corpus propheticum* between cult and ethics, with the undervaluation or downright negation of the cult and concurrent glorification of ethics. We believe the fourth interpretation above to be more congruent with the message of the entire book, as it does not present an account of Hos 6:6 isolated from the global context of the book, instead placing it within the framework of Hosea's call for the development of proper understanding of the cult, conceived of as the symbiosis of rite with moral conduct.

2. The Matthean *Vorlage* of Hos 6:6

When referring to Hos 6:6, Matthew the Evangelist cites it both times in the same textual form: ἔλεος θέλω καὶ οὐ θυσίαν (9:13; 12:7). The above phrasing of the text is a direct calque from Hebrew, and the Matthean textual tradition is unanimous in the case of both references.³³ The expression וְלֹא (*wəlō*, “and not”) has been rendered as καὶ οὐ. An identical form of Hos 6:6 can be found in the *Codex Alexandrinus* and in the works of Origen: διότι ἔλεος θέλω

rejecting or downgrading sacrifice, Hosea upholds the ideal of an authentic cult integrated with ethical values, where both priests and people observe proper ritual conduct and lead moral lives, in opposition to false worship, which is devoid of ethics.”

³² J.J. Schmitt, “Prophecy: Preexilic Hebrew Prophecy,” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D.N. Freedman, (New York, NY: Doubleday 1992), V, 486.

³³ Only in the case of Matt 12:7, *Codex Δ* (ninth century) attests to the reading καὶ οὐχί, which is nevertheless identical in its meaning.

καὶ οὐ θυσίαν καὶ ἐπίγνωσιν θεοῦ ἢ ὀλοκαυτώματα.³⁴ Hence, Matthew may have either translated the text from Hebrew himself or he could have cited the LXX in the version supported by *Codex Alexandrinus*. The intriguing fact, however, is that there exists another form of the Greek text of Hos 6:6, which has the expression נְלִי (*wəlō*) translated as a relative conjunction ἢ. This text is attested to in *Codex Vaticanus* and several manuscripts of Lucian Recension: διότι ἔλεος θέλω ἢ θυσίαν καὶ ἐπίγνωσιν θεοῦ ἢ ὀλοκαυτώματα. As we have noted above, when presenting the translation of the Hebrew text, literal translation of the Hebrew as καὶ οὐ is illogical; therefore, it can be assumed that a correct translation from Hebrew to Greek should have the comparative conjunction ἢ. This conclusion is also corroborated by the translation to Aramaic.³⁵ In the Targum of Jonathan we read: "For those who do acts of kindness are more desirable before me than he that sacrifices, and those who carry out the law of the Lord more than those that offer up burnt offerings."³⁶ It may be supposed that the knowledge of Hebrew of the Targumist enabled him to decide that the comparative meaning of the initial section of Hos 6:6 is indeed the correct one. One could present the hypothesis that the reading καὶ οὐ in Hos 6:6, found in the *Codex Alexandrinus* and in the Greek texts by Origen, may have

³⁴ The same correlation between the Old Testament text of Hos 6:6 and its two-time citation in Matt can also be found in the Syriac texts: we come across נְלִי (נְלִי) on three occasions. See M. Pazzini, *Il libro dei dodici profeti. Versione siriana. Vocalizzazione completa* (Studium Biblicum Franciscanum Analecta 72; Milano: Franciscan Printing Press – Edizioni Terra Santa 2009), 14.

³⁵ See T.W. Manson, "The Old Testament in the Teaching of Jesus," *Bulletin of John Rylands Library* 34 (1952): 321; R.H. Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel with Special Reference to the Messianic Hope* (Supplements to Novum Testamentum 18; Leiden: Brill 1967), 111: "ἢ should be preferred as the original reading of the LXX, because it disagrees with the MT and because it agrees with the Targum."

³⁶ Aramaic text: A. Sperber, ed., *The Bible in Aramaic based on Old Manuscripts and Printed Texts. III. The Latter Prophets according to Targum Jonathan* (Leiden: Brill 1962) *ad loc.*; English translation: K.J. Cathcart and R.P. Gordon, *The Targum of the Minor Prophets. Translated, with a Critical Introduction, Apparatus, and Notes* (The Aramaic Bible 14; Wilmington: M. Glazier 1989), 42.

been developed following Matt 9:13 and 12:7³⁷ or stemmed from the influence of Origen's Hexapla.³⁸ The original text from the LXX would thus be supported by *Codex Vaticanus* and several manuscripts of Lucian Recension. In light of the above hypothesis, Matthew himself cited and translated the passage directly from the Hebrew text in a literal manner, without taking into consideration the comparative meaning of the latter section of Hos 6:6. I believe such a translation philosophy motivating this choice by Matthew to have had its origin in the rabbinic Judaism of the period, which completely rejected any concept of synonymous parallelism (cf. *Midrash Rabba* 98,11). Hillel and his contemporaries treated the Writings and the Prophets on par with the Torah, i.e. as legal texts from which any sort of parallelism had to be removed (see *m. Hag.* 1,6; cf. *b. Hag.* 9b). According to their premise, every line or verse of the Biblical text, having come from the Divine lawgiver, must carry equal weight, revealing a new truth or a new law. In the divine law, there could be no redundant provisions or reiterations of other laws as their synonyms. David Instone-Brewer has claimed that such a hermeneutic principle has only been verified in Palestine among some rabbinic authorities and rabbinic literature which can be dated before A.D. 70. After that caesura, as well as in other centres of

³⁷ A similar, Christian (Matthean) influence is supposed by some in the case of the text of *Sibylline Oracles*: "Mercy (ἐλεος) redeems from death when judgment comes. Not sacrifice, but mercy (ἐλεος) God desires rather than sacrifice" (2:81–82). So C.A. Ham, "The Minor Prophets in Matthew's Gospel," *The Minor Prophets in the New Testament*, eds. M.J.J. Menken and S. Moyise, (The New Testament and the Scriptures of Israel – Library of New Testament Studies 377; London – New York, NY: T. & T. Clark 2009), 46. Others are of the opinion that Hos 6:6 in the *Sibylline Oracle* (2:82) is a Jewish interpolation, dated to second or first century B.C. and created in Egypt (Alexandria), as it is perfectly congruent with the theology of the Jewish populace living there with no access to the Temple in Jerusalem. Here we have the kindness toward brethren and not the Jerusalem offerings as the thing desired by God. See G. Lusini, "La citation d'Osée 6:6 dans les *Oracles Sibyllins*," "Car c'est l'amour qui me plaît, non le sacrifice..." *Recherches sur Osée 6:6 et son interprétation juive et chrétienne*, ed. E. Bons, (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 88; Leiden: Brill 2004), 43–55.

³⁸ R.H. Gundry, *Use of the Old Testament*, 111: "for if καὶ οὐ were original and better attested, it is difficult to see why Or^{lat} should support ἤ while Or supports καὶ οὐ."

Judaic theology (Qumran, Alexandria), parallelism was treated as a poetic phenomenon.³⁹ The caesura of the year 70, put forth by D. Instone-Brewer, does not seem very convincing, for Targum Neofiti (fourth century A.D.⁴⁰) also explains synonymous parallelisms as conveying two separate items of truth (see Gen 49:10). Therefore, Mathew would be citing the first section of the parallelism in Hos 6:6 directly from the Hebrew text, claiming the unique role of mercy and meaninglessness of cult. The other section, conveying an entirely different message (with the cult indeed having a relative value), was omitted as irreconcilable with Matthean theology.

3. The Rereading of Hos 6:6 in the Gospel of Matthew

Matthew's rereading of the prophecy of Hos 6:6 will now be presented in light of two approaches that were pervasive in the gospel writer's contemporary exegetical discussions, and with a deliberate omission of the oftentimes allegorical patristic interpretations.⁴¹ First, we will present the synchronic reading of the

³⁹ D. Instone-Brewer, "The Two Asses of Zechariah 9:9 in Matthew 21," *Tyndale Bulletin* 54/1 (2003): 94–5; D. Instone-Brewer, *Techniques and Assumptions in Jewish Exegesis before 70 CE* (TSAJ 30; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1992), 166–7 and 215–21, here 167: "Perhaps they [rabbis] recognized the poetic form, but read it Nomologically when it was found in Scripture, which they regarded as a legal document, not poetry." One of five principle exegetical assumptions of the Nomological approach claimed that every detail in Scripture is significant (216).

⁴⁰ This dating is proposed by M. McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis. Translated, with Apparatus and Notes*, (The Aramaic Bible 1A; Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press 1992), 44–5.

⁴¹ For the first two centuries of Christianity, Hos 6:6 was not referred to at all. The first to cite it were Irenaeus of Lyons (*Adv. Haer.* IV, 17,4), Clement of Alexandria (*Quis div.* 39), and Origen (*Lev. Hom.* II, 5; IV, 5; *Ps. Hom.* 36, III, 11; *Gen. Hom.* XIII, 2). See M.C. Pennacchio, "L'interprétation patristique d'Osée 6:6," "Car c'est l'amour qui me plaît, non le sacrifice..." Recherches sur Osée 6:6 et son interprétation juive et chrétienne, ed. E. Bons, (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 88; Leiden: Brill 2004), 147–78. We have mentioned above the citations of Hos 6:6 in the *Sibylline Oracles* (2,82, see also 8,334), whose precise dating proves difficult and so, too, the identification of Christian influences therein. Cf. F. Calabi, "Les sacrifices et leur signification symbolique chez Philon

passage, that is, the understanding of both occurrences of the citation in the final version of the text of the Gospel. Subsequently, through a diachronic reading, we will discuss the Matthean use of Hos 6:6 in the context of the history of Matthew's community and his dialogue with the rabbinic Judaism of his times.

3.1. Synchronic Reading

Matt 9:13. In ancient Israel, table fellowship was reserved for closest friends; it generally required the same beliefs and patterns of behaviour to be shared by all those sitting at it. The fact of Jesus' fraternising at the table with tax collectors and sinners resulted in a backlash from the Pharisees. Jesus answers them, quoting Hos 6:6, where the prophet mentions mercy and sacrifice. The inclusion of the citation is surprising, for there is nothing in the context related to offerings. The introduction, "go and learn what it means" (πορευθέντες δὲ μάθετε τί ἐστὶν) is an equivalent of a standard rabbinic formula introducing a citation: *למך ללמד*. It means not as much "go and learn," as "go and discern the meaning of the Scripture," "go and draw the appropriate conclusion from this dictum."⁴² Certainly, the reference to Hos 6:6 must have been easy to recognise both for the Pharisees of the time and the readers of the Gospel of Matthew. The notion of sacrifice may have evoked the context of ritual purity, and hence the exclusion from common feasting of all the ritually impure, in this case – tax collectors and sinners. Consequently, Jesus would be invalidating and rejecting the regulations pertaining to purity (scrupulously observed by the Pharisees), interpreting Hos 6:6 as a repudiation of the cult. However, the citation from Hos 6:6 may also be understood as a comparative clause⁴³, as indicated by renowned scholars, but better

d'Alexandrie," *"Car c'est l'amour qui me plaît, non le sacrifice..."* Recherches sur Osée 6:6 et son interprétation juive et chrétienne, ed. E. Bons, (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 88; Leiden: Brill 2004), 97–117.

⁴² H.L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch. I. Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (München: Oskar Beck 1922), 499.

⁴³ So U. Luz, *Matthew 8–20, A Commentary* (Hermeneia – A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress 2001), 34. The reference

still, in the spirit of the very Book of Hosea, as a call for the symbiosis between the offering and love. On such a reading, Jesus would not be rejecting purity, and thus the entirety of the cult (see Matt 5:18–19), but merely pointing to the indispensable and crucial function of purity within the cult (see 5:23–24).

The semantics of the term ἔλεος should also be noted, it being the word that the LXX uses to translate the Hosean חֶסֶד (*hesed*). The Hebrew term may be defined as God's covenant faithfulness and loyalty, and hence His faithfulness and loyalty in the relationship with man. As Matthew used the Hebrew text when quoting Hos 6:6, he might have intended to convey the semantic nuance of the covenant. Indeed, the relational aspect of the term is of great importance for the attitude assumed by Jesus. By encouraging the Pharisees to understand what the Scripture says, Jesus demonstrates that he had understood the teaching of Hosea – God's will conveyed therein. Furthermore, it also points to the fact that through his actions Jesus does fulfil the prophetic teaching (5:17), and that he does so in a manner more complete than the Pharisees (5:20). Jesus' bearing toward sinners is indeed the fulfilment of the most profound sense of the Old Testament prophecies. Jesus, acting like God and being God himself, remains in relationship with everyone He has established the covenant with, including rebellious sinners (see Hos 1–3). Jesus could even be revealing himself as the divine bridegroom at Hos 2:16, encountering and accepting his sinful and impure bride. In fact, the immediate literary context, namely Mt 9:15, explicitly identifies Jesus as the bridegroom.⁴⁴ The citation from Hosea thus becomes the key to the explanation of the attitude of Jesus.⁴⁵ Ulrich

made by the commentator to Matt 23:23–28, as the passage illustrating the primacy of love over the Torah (i.e. cult), does not seem convincing in light of (1) the text of 5:18–19, as well as (2) the notion of the symbiosis between the cult and morality in 5:23–24.

⁴⁴ More R. Eagy, "Matthew 9:9-17 and the Divine Bridegroom of Hosea," *The Expository Times* 128/11 (2017): 521–8.

⁴⁵ Such an interpretation is aptly summarised by Benjamin J. Ribbens ("Whose 'Mercy'? What 'Sacrifice'? A Proposed Reading of Matthew's Hosea 6:6 Quotations," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 28/3 [2018]: 392): "Jesus' covenant faithfulness is viewed in a more Christological or messianic sense, because Jesus's

Luz points out that there is a reason why those in need would address Jesus with the word ἐλέησον (“have mercy” – 9:27; 15:22; 17:15; 20:30.31) from that moment on throughout Matthew’s narrative.⁴⁶

Benjamin J. Ribbens listed four difficulties created by the above interpretation. They all consist in the limited understanding of ἔλεος as referring exclusively to Jesus’s behaviour, which demonstrates God’s covenant faithfulness.⁴⁷ Instead, ἔλεος should express the attitude of sinners toward Jesus. Ribbens summarises his interpretative proposal in the following way: “Since Matthew appears to be aware of the Hosean context and since Matthew inserts Hos 6:6a between vv. 12 and 13b, which identify Jesus’s ministry as calling the sick, Matthew is likely drawing on the sickness imagery of Hosea. Just as ἔλεος in Hos 6:6a is the covenant faithfulness that the ‘sick’ – Ephraim and Judah – ought to have toward the LORD in order to be healed by the LORD and restored to his presence, so also ἔλεος in Matt 9:9-13 might be the covenant faithfulness that the ‘sick’ – this time the tax collectors and sinners – ought to have toward Jesus – the κύριος (see 7:21-22; 8:2, 6, 21, 25; 9:28; 12:8, etc.) – in order to be healed by Jesus and restored to the divine

ἔλεος is identified with God’s covenant faithfulness. Jesus, through table fellowship with tax collectors and sinners, is demonstrating God’s covenant faithfulness toward ‘sick’ Israel (cf. Hos 6:1–3). Hosea 6:2 depicts restoration in terms of living in the LORD’s presence, and Jesus’s table fellowship brings the ‘sick’ into communion with God. Thus, Jesus’s ἔλεος is his messianic mission – that is, bringing the LORD’s ἔλεος by extending fellowship to sinners.”

⁴⁶ Luz, *Matthew* 8-20, 34.

⁴⁷ B. Ribbens (“Whose ‘Mercy’?”, 392–3) argues: “First, the main weakness is that covenant faithfulness ‘is not at all what springs to mind in the Matthean context.’ The result is a convoluted notion of how the Pharisees lack covenant faithfulness – that is, their lack of merciful actions to the tax collectors and sinners manifests their lack of covenant faithfulness to God. Although rejecting the definition of ἔλεος as human compassion, proponents of this position still must identify the failure of the Pharisees as a failure to extend human compassion. Second, this proposal requires dual notions of covenant faithfulness, because the Pharisees ought to have covenant faithfulness toward God, whereas Jesus enacts the covenant faithfulness of God toward his people. Third, the notion that ἔλεος denotes God’s covenant faithfulness as enacted through Jesus does not match the use of ἔλεος directed toward the LORD. Fourth, if ἔλεος represents, at least in part, God’s mercy enacted through Jesus, it is difficult to make sense of θυσία. Is θυσία the counterpoint to God’s covenant faithfulness?”

presence. Thus, ἔλεος is not what the Pharisees ought to have toward the tax collectors and sinners but what the tax collector and sinners have toward Jesus. While Matt 9:9–13 does not suggest that all the tax collectors and sinners dining with Jesus had ἔλεος, Matthew is the representative tax collector and sinner in 9:9–13 who does respond affirmatively to Jesus's call and has ἔλεος.⁴⁸ Consequently, B. Ribbens defines θυσία not as a sacrificial or cultic counterpoint to Jesus' mercy, but as another venue by which Jews, here tax collectors and sinners, were able to remove their sins, and consequently be restored to God and enter the divine presence.

Matt 12:7. When defending the behaviour of his disciples, who were plucking the heads of grain on the Sabbath, Jesus uses three arguments, of which Hos 6:6 is the third. Firstly, he points to the instance when David and his men were allowed by High Priest Abimelech of Nob to eat the bread of the Presence, reserved exclusively for priests (1 Sam 21:1–7). Matthew emphasises the fact that both the disciples of Jesus (12:1), as well as David and his companions (12:3) had been hungry. Much like the episode narrated by Matthew, also the event described in 1 Sam 21:1–7 occurs on the Sabbath; it is indicated by the fact that the bread of the Presence had been prepared (1 Sam 21:7; cf. Lev 24:8). Rabbis considered life-threatening hunger a good enough reason to break the Sabbath law (*m. Yoma* 8,6). Indeed, Jesus does refer to his disciples as innocent (Matt 12:7).

Jesus introduces the second argument by evoking the precept given to the priests that they should work on Sabbath, making offerings at the Temple (Num 28:9–10). Hence, in this case the Torah allowed them to transgress the Sabbath law. Jesus concludes this example using one of the seven principle rabbinic hermeneutic rules, identified by Hillel, called *qal wahomer* ("light and heavy"), i.e. *argumentum a minori ad maius*. Thus, he states: "something greater than the temple is here" (Matt 12:6).

The above verse may be understood in two ways. The first interpretation falls either within the Christological⁴⁹ framework

⁴⁸ Ribbens, "Whose 'Mercy'?", 393.

⁴⁹ J. Gnllka, *Das Matthäusevangelium* (HThKNT 1/1; Freiburg: Herder 1986), 444.

or that of the Kingdom of Heaven.⁵⁰ On such a reading, the entire pericope features the *qual wahomer* argumentation: (1) David in the tabernacle is juxtaposed with Jesus (*vel* the Kingdom of Heaven), something greater than the temple. (2) If the work in the temple is not subject to the Sabbath and Jesus is something greater than the temple, moreover being the Lord of the Sabbath (12:8), then His disciples are allowed to work on Sabbath at Jesus's behest. The said line (12:6) may also be given a broader understood, with the neuter gender of the adjective μᾶζον ("something greater") referring to mercy (the citation from Hos 6:6 in Matt 12:7), as something greater than the temple offerings on the Sabbath.⁵¹ The commentators who adopt that explanation tend to interpret Hos 6:6 comparatively: God desires mercy (compassion for the hungry) more than sacrifice (in abidance by the law of the Sabbath).⁵² According to the line of interpretation favoured in this paper, it is not the right approach. We should once more fall back on the notion of the symbiosis between the cult and moral conduct. Without any disregard of the cult, one has to acknowledge the needs of a starving man and show him mercy, by letting him satisfy his hunger. Thus, Jesus is calling the Pharisees to show mercy to His starving disciples. It is in that way that the former will be able to fulfil the Torah, that is ἔλεος (23:23; 22:39–40).⁵³ In light of the reading of Hos 6:6 adopted here, it is impossible to accept the identification of μᾶζον ("something greater") with mercy. The only thing greater than both the temple

⁵⁰ E. Schweizer, "Matthäus 12,1-8: Der Sabbat: Gebot und Geschenk," *Glaube und Gerechtigkeit. In memoriam R. Gyllenberg*, eds. J. Kiilunen *et al.*, (Suomen Eksegeettisen Seuran julkaisuja 38; Helsinki: Finnische Exegetische Gesellschaft 1983), 171.

⁵¹ So: U. Luz, *Matthew 9-20*, 182: "Thus what is greater than the temple is mercy, which in Jesus' interpretation of the will of God has become the greatest thing."

⁵² See U. Luz, *Matthew 9-20*, 182: "we must interpret the negation in the Hosea quotation dialectically and not antithetically. God wants mercy *more* than sacrifice."

⁵³ Interestingly enough, B. Ribbens ("Whose 'Mercy'?", 401–3) argues that ἔλεος refers not to the Pharisees or Jesus, but to the covenant faithfulness of Jesus' followers, in this instance, the disciples. By plucking grain under the direction and the purview of Jesus the disciples were fulfilling Jesus' will, enacting ἔλεος, i.e. covenant faithfulness. The Pharisees are then called to do the same: become Jesus' disciples and live the lives of his discipleship.

and human morality (including mercy) is God and God's ἔλεος. Jesus discloses Himself as God and the Lord of the Sabbath, who surrounds the starving with mercy on the Sabbath, and in a subsequent context, heals the man with a withered hand (12:9–14) also on the Sabbath. Not as much negating or devaluing the Sabbath, Jesus attributes the proper meaning to that day: that of revealing God's (and consequently human) love.

The interpretation above corresponds to the semantics of the lexeme *חסד* (*hesed*) in Hos 6:6. The essence of *חסד* consists in loving one's neighbour, that is, helping him or her whenever he or she is in need or danger. As Ziegert defined it: "what God desires more than – or rather than – sacrifices are actions (provided by some A) to the benefit of some person or group of people (whoever B might be) who are in danger or are experiencing a critical impairment (whatever D might be) and who cannot avert this danger themselves."⁵⁴ A stands for Agentive (here it is Jesus), B – Benefactive (Jesus' disciples) and D – Danger/Risk (hunger) aspects. Jesus' introductory words "if you had known what this means" are not an empty and meaningless standard introductory formula, but they indeed mean what they say: the Pharisees do not know the real purport of Hos 6:6, encapsulated in the meaning of *חסד* in this verse.

3.2. Diachronic Reading

As observed above, Hos 6:6 is cited twice by Matthew, but it is not featured in the parallel Synoptic Gospels. Hence, the fact that Hos 6:6 appears in Matt resulted from theological considerations of the editor, oftentimes referred to as "the Matthean school." However, it cannot be ruled out that the citation had actually been used by Jesus and was preserved by oral transmission. Our attention is also drawn to the fact that Hos 6:6 receives no mention from other New Testament hagiographers, even in their texts about the cult. This indicates the importance of the passage for Matthew and his community, and a concurrent lack of such an intense interest among the remaining groups of the early Church.

⁵⁴ Ziegert, "What is *חסד*?", 729.

According to David Hill, both Matthean pericopes that cite Hos 6:6 can be interpreted against the backdrop of the history of Matthew's community.⁵⁵ Matt 9:9–13 illustrates the fraternisation between Christians of Jewish descent (represented by Jesus and his disciples) with Christians of gentile descent (represented by tax collectors and sinners). In light of that hypothesis, the Matthean community would constitute a mixed group in terms both of its religious and ethnic (Jewish–gentile) background. Acts and Galatians, dealing with the incident at Antioch and the council of Jerusalem (held around 50 A.D.) point to the genuine problem of both these groups co-existing within the early Church. Therefore, the issue may also have emerged in Matthew's community, traditionally associated with Palestine and the Near East. In its confrontation with Pharisaic Judaism the Matthean community (expelled from the synagogue after A.D. 70) would defend their attitude by referring to Hos 6:6. The community may even have been defending against accusations raised by the members of the Church who, having converted from Judaism (e.g. Pharisaism), would adhere to exceptionalism, closed to gentiles. By referring to the attitude of Jesus and His disciples, as well as Old Testament writings (paraphrasing Matthew's, "go and learn from the Scripture" – 9:13), Matthew demonstrates that the faithfulness to God's will involves crossing social, cultic, and religious boundaries.

According to R. Hummel⁵⁶ and D. Hill, in the case of Matt 12:1–8 the Matthean Church claimed in their debate against Pharisaism that it is the law of ἔλεος, the law of doing good that fulfils the Sabbath rule. In that manner, the community justified their activity on the Sabbath, for they conceived of it as good deeds. If the Law and the Prophets are fulfilled in the double Commandment of Love (22:40), the Sabbath obligation is fulfilled by the law of doing good, the law of ἔλεος, the law of ἡσέδ (hesed), of God's loyal love

⁵⁵ D. Hill, "On the Use and Meaning of Hosea VI. 6 in Matthew's Gospel," *New Testament Studies* 24 (1978): 107–19.

⁵⁶ R. Hummel, *Die Auseinandersetzung zwischen Kirche und Judentum im Matthäusevangelium* (BEvTh 33; München: Kaiser 1963), 43–4.

for man and man's for God, expressed through loving our neighbours.⁵⁷

Rabbinic literature, in principle created at a period later than the New Testament, quotes Hos 6:6 very often. Despite their later dating, it was these writings that served contemporary commentators as the backdrop for their interpretation of Matthew's application of Hos 6:6.⁵⁸ It was due to the beliefs of Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai, who died in A.D. 80, and whose activity and influence, therefore, were contemporary to the creation of the Gospel of Matthew. In the oldest rabbinic texts citing Hos 6:6, the passage is always referred to the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem (A.D. 70). Besides the practice of reading of the Torah and daily prayer, rabbis regarded the deeds of love (חסד *hesed*) as the indicator of the continued existence of Judaism after the destruction of the Temple (*b. Ber.* 55a). Here, חסד (*hesed*)—understood as specific deeds of love (*b. Suk.* 49b)—becomes a new method of expiation for sins. *Aboth de Rabbi Nathan* 4 presents a dialogue between the aforementioned Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai and his disciple, Rabbi Joshua, a classic text presenting the expiatory value of the "deeds of mercy," literally "deeds of loves" (גמילות חסדים) in the context of the Temple's destruction.⁵⁹ Importantly, Rabbi Yohanan cites Hos

⁵⁷ Other diachronic approaches are also possible, though they are less convincing. For instance, B. Gerhardsson sees Matt 12:1–8 as a juxtaposition of priests at the temple with the cult of Jesus and his disciples. On one hand, it is an external cult by virtue of sacrifices (the temple), while on the other it is the inner (spiritual) cult performed by practicing love (Matthew's Church). See B. Gerhardsson, "Sacrificial Service and Atonement in the Gospel of Matthew," *Reconciliation and Hope. New Testament Essays on Atonement and Eschatology Presented to L.L. Morris on his 60th Birthday*, ed. R. Banks, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1974), 28.

⁵⁸ Cf. B. Standaert, "Misericordia voglio (Mt 9,13 e 12,7)," *Parola, Spirito e Vita* 29 (1994): 109–19; P. Podeszwa, "La funzione di Os 6,6 nella comprensione mattea dell'Antico Testamento," *Colloquia Theologica Adalbertina* 3 (2001): 49–81; P. Podeszwa, "Misericordia voglio e non sacrificio". *La rilettura di Os 6,6 nel Vangelo di Matteo* (Excerpta ex dissertatione ad Doctoratum in Facultate Theologiae Pontificiae Universitatis Gregorianae; Romae 2001).

⁵⁹ *Aboth de Rabbi Nathan*, ed. S. Schechter (Hildesheim – New York: Olms 1993), 11. Benjamin Ribbens ("Whose 'Mercy'?", 390–1) noted that "the Rabbis created lists of such deeds of mercy that included, among other things, feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, taking in strangers, clothing the naked, and visiting the sick and imprisoned."

6:6 as the argument to present the expiatory value of the deeds of mercy. In light of other rabbinic writings, חסד (*hesed*) may serve the expiatory function, for it predates the Temple. Indeed, the very creation of the world was performed on the basis of חסד (cf. *Avot de Rabbi Nathan* 4).⁶⁰ Rabbi Yohanan (*Avot* 1,2) was alleged to have said that the word had been built upon three things: the Torah, the offerings, and the “deeds of love” (גמילות חסדים). In their arguments for the eternal status of חסד (*hesed*), the rabbis referred to Ps 89:3 (see *Avot de Rabbi Nathan* 4). Therefore, the text of Hos 6:6 serves them to illustrate the primacy of חסד (*hesed*) over the temple offerings.⁶¹

The diachronic reading, picturing the Matthean Church involved in the process of dialogue, oftentimes heated up to the level of a dispute, seems particularly appealing in light of the above-quoted rabbinic texts, presenting חסד (*hesed*) as an expiatory measure. Also, the timeframe for this potential dialogue is plausible, meaning the period after the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70. The impact of rabbinic Judaism on the use of Hos 6:6 by Matthew may also be seen in the Gospel in the application of the specific formulae introducing the passage (πορευθέντες δὲ μάθετε τί ἐστὶν – “go and learn what it means” – 9:13; εἰ δὲ ἐγνώκατε τί ἐστὶν – “if you had known what this means” – 12:7), typical of rabbinic literature. Matthew himself presents “justice” (κρίσις), “mercy” (ἔλεος), and “faith” (πίστις) as “more important” (τὰ βαρύτερα) in the Law. These three notions, (צדקה *ṣḏqāh*, חסד *hesed*, אמת *’ēmet*) form the foundation of the Hosean understanding of the תורה (*tôrāh*) and they recur in the above texts by the rabbis. The midrash to Prov 21:3 cites an opinion expressed by Rabbi Eleazar, who believed that the practice of justice (צדקה *ṣḏqāh*) and righteousness (משפט *mišpāṭ*) is dearer to God

⁶⁰ See also *Pirque de R. Eliezer* 11 [12],16 (31a), a text dated to eighth century after Christ, that speaks of making the offerings of the “deeds of mercy” (גמילות חסדים) instead of bloody sacrifices, in the context of the creation of the world on the basis of חסד (*hesed*) and the creation of first man and woman, to whom the angels brought חסד (*hesed*).

⁶¹ For an extensive treatment of the subject see M. Millard, “Osée 6,6 dans l’histoire de l’interprétation juive,” 119–46.

than burnt offerings (עֹלָה *‘ōlāh*) and sacrifices (זֶבַח *zeḇaḥ*).⁶² The mention of these two types of offerings alludes to Hos 6:6. In the midrash to Ps 9:1 (*Tehillim Shochar Tov* 9,2) we can read of Salomon's wish to know the award awaiting for those who observe the commandments. Salomon does not receive a direct answer to his question, but it is said that man's love (חֶסֶד *hesed*) and obeying the commandments constitute the answer to God's love (חֶסֶד *hesed*) and God's covenant faithfulness.⁶³ After all, it was the rabbis who claimed that the study of the Torah is an equivalent of offerings (*b. Men.* 110a).

Thus, the Matthean Church and rabbinic Judaism may have met in their understanding of the role of חֶסֶד (*hesed*) in the lives of believers. In that sense, Matthew's words about the synthesis of the Law and the Prophets in the Double Commandment of Love, and the essence of the Law in the form of justice, mercy, and faith, resemble the diagnoses presented by rabbinic Judaism. There is, however, a significant difference between the two, namely the figure of Jesus, who reveals Himself as the incarnation of God's ἔλεος and the means of ultimate expiation. The resulting identity and role of Jesus was something that rabbinic Judaism could not accept.

Conclusion

The first part of the article presents four different readings of Hosea 6:6 in the context of the entire book: (1) repudiation of the cult as such, (2) the rejection of a specific *notion* of cult, (3) the priority of ethics *over* the cult, and (4) the symbiosis of cult *and* ethics. The fourth interpretation best fits the message of the Book of Hosea.

The second part of the article deals with the problem of the textual *Vorlage* that may have been used by Matthew. It seems that

⁶² The original text: *Midrash Mishle. A Critical Edition Based on Vatican MS. Ebr.* 44, ed. B.L. Visotzky, (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America 1990) *at loc.* Translation: *The Midrash on Proverbs*, transl. B.L. Visotzky, (Yale Judaica Series 27; New Haven: Brown 1991). The same notion of supremacy of justice over offerings can be found in *DtnR Shoftim* 5,3. See *Midrash Debarim Rabbah. Edited for the First Time from the Oxford ms. No. 147 with an Introduction and Notes*, ed. S. Liebermann, (Jerusalem: Wahrmann 1974), 96.

⁶³ M. Millard, "Osée 6,6 dans l'histoire de l'interprétation juive," 124.

he quoted from the Hebrew text, being faithful to a contemporary hermeneutical rule, according to which each part of a biblical parallelism was interpreted separately.

The Matthean rereading of Hosea 6:6 is considered by scholars from two perspectives: the synchronic and the diachronic one. In the synchronic presentation, Hosean prophecy sees Jesus as a competent commentator of the Hebrew Bible. The repetition of Hos 6:6 in the Gospel of Matthew serves to underscore the sad conclusion, stating the Pharisees' lack of understanding of Jesus' teaching. Indeed, these are the first Matthean passages showing Jesus in his disputes with the Pharisees. Here we have Jesus correctly interpreting the Torah and the Prophets; concurrently showing how to carry out these precepts through one's conduct. Jesus is in fact the incarnation of God's $\tau\omicron\pi/\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$, loyal love experienced within the covenant, directed toward every lost sinner.

Considering the diachronic approach, one may regard the Matthean Church as going through the process of disputes with various factions within itself or with the contemporary rabbinic Judaism. However, the Gospel of Matthew and the rabbinic Judaism of the period may also be seen as unanimous. For what matters is $\tau\omicron\pi/\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$, God's faithful love and man's faithful love for God and for other men. In light of the destruction of the Temple (Judaism) or the presence of the temple identified as the God of Love and His Church (Matthean Church), it is the $\tau\omicron\pi/\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ that has the power of expiating sins. However, what distinguishes Judaism from the Matthean Church is the relationship between $\tau\omicron\pi/\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ and Jesus: for Judaism, $\tau\omicron\pi/\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ constitute merely the deeds of mercy, whereas for Matthew they are also the Incarnate Love, who through His deed of love performed the ultimate expiation, and in His mercy offers Himself to sinners.