

Shadow and Reality

The Philosophical and Religious Background of the Epistle to the Hebrews

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Synopsis:

Introduction

I. Hebrews and Philonism

- (a) **Allegorism**
 - Growth of a Greek allegorical tradition
 - Philo's allegorism
 - The Melchizedek theme in Hebrews
 - Allegory and typology
- (b) **Use of the Septuagint**
 - Exactness of quotation
 - Text of LXX used
 - Manner of citation
- (c) **Vocabulary**
 - Alleged Alexandrianisms
 - Words common to Hebrews and Philo
- (d) **Thought-Forms**
 - Philosophical presuppositions
 - Platonic Theory of Ideas and Eschatological Emphasis
 - "The living Word of God"
- (e) **Summary**

II. Hebrews and Qumran

- (a) **Biblical Exegesis**
 - The *peshet* method of interpretation
 - Peshet* and the exegesis in Heb. 10.37-39
 - The relation of ch. 11 to the exegesis in 10.37-39
 - Ch. 11 and Stephen's speech in Acts 7
 - Qumran use of O.T. quotation apart from the commentaries
 - Introductory formulae in Qumran literature
 - Possible use of *testimonia* in Qumran and Hebrews
- (b) **Attitude to Sacrifices, Temple and Priesthood**
 - Testimony of Philo and Josephus
 - Qumran emphasis on "superior purifications" and on "spiritual sacrifices"
 - Emphasis of Hebrews on the imperfection of the *cultus*
 - Temple or Tabernacle. The pilgrim people
 - Qumran and the corruption of the Jerusalem priesthood
 - Hebrews and the imperfection of the priesthood
 - Cullmann's hypothesis – John (Hebrews), Stephen, Qumran
 - Spicq's hypothesis – Hebrews, Apollos, John the Baptist, the Hellenists, Qumran
- (c) **Messianic Expectations**
 - The Messiahs of Aaron and Israel
 - The Melchizekian Messiah – priest and king
 - The concept of royal priesthood
- (d) **The New Covenant**
 - New Covenant and eschatology at Qumran
 - The basis of the New Covenant in Hebrews
- (e) **Summary**

III. Hebrews and Early Christianity

- (a) **The Primitive Tradition**
 Synoptic tradition – “temptations”, purification of the Temple, the rent veil of the Temple,
 suffering “outside the gate”
 Relation to the apostolic *kerygma*
 Relation to primitive eschatology
- (b) **Paulinism**
 Divergences of detail and theological emphasis
 Correspondences in Christology
 Further parallels
- (c) **Lucan Writings**
 Styles of Luke-Acts and Hebrews
 Westcott’s and Jones’ lists of words in common
 Significant parallels
 Minor details indicating a similarity of fact or detail
 Emphasis on the ascension
- (d) **The Johannine Literature**
 The concept of Law
 The humanity and divinity of Jesus
 The prologues to the Fourth Gospel and to Hebrews
- (e) **Summary**

Conclusion

Note:

- (1) French works are always quoted in English translation.
- (2) Philo and Eusebius of Caesarea are usually quoted from the translation in the Loeb Classical Library edition (Heinemann, London), standard annotations being used.
- (3) The Dead Sea Scrolls are usually quoted in T.T. Gaster’s translation. References to the Scrolls, however, have been cast in the form at present generally accepted by scholars.
- (4) Apart from normal abbreviations, attention is drawn to the use of the following –
 - LXX – Septuagint
 - Vg. – Vulgate
 - lit. – literal (translation)

The following abbreviations are made for journals –

- ET – *Expository Times*
- HJ – *Hibbert Journal*
- HTR – *Harvard Theological Review*
- JTS – *Journal of Theological Studies* (New Series)
- NTS – *New Testament Studies*
- RQ – *Révue de Qumrân*
- SJT – *Scottish Journal of Theology*

Introduction

Eusebius of Caesarea has preserved Origen's statement on the subject of the authorship of Hebrews – "If any church holds this epistle as Paul's, let it be commended for this also. For not without reason have the men of old time handed it down as Paul's. But who wrote this epistle, in truth God knows" (*H.E.* VI. xxv. 13-14). Despite the many attempts to find the author of the Epistle, these latter words continue to represent the state of our knowledge.

However, it is not the present purpose to indulge in speculation concerning authorship, but to give attention to what is more basic and profitable than such speculation – *viz.* the philosophical and religious background of the Epistle.

The interest in the background of the Epistle was only aroused when the Pauline authorship became widely disputed. The first strong reaction was towards seeing the Epistle as predominantly Philonic. This movement reached its peak at the end of the nineteenth century in a complete denial of any Paulinism and an interpretation of the Epistle in terms of philosophical influences outside the New Testament.

With the discovery of the Qumran literature, however, considerable interest has been focused on the possible relationship of some of the New Testament writings to this literature. Now, it must be clearly stated at this point that a number of writers have seized the opportunity to attempt by ill-considered arguments to debunk the distinctiveness of the Christian message, stating that Christianity is merely a development of Essenism. Other writers have looked for Qumran connections as a kind of "latest fashion" in New Testament studies. Probably, however, conclusions of this kind of study should at this stage be more cautiously tentative, and, while each comparison should receive its due weight, a broader background of thought rather than specific dependence seems to be indicated.

An unfortunate result of the quest for the background of the Epistle has been the tendency noted above to consider it in terms of outside influences. There are some indications that this tendency may be passing, yet even in more recent considerations of Qumranian background the connections of the Epistle with the main-stream of early Christian thought are easily overlooked. Thus, to cite one notable example, the reaction against Pauline authorship has been taken to an unwarranted extreme with the emphasis on differences and little attention to resemblances.

It is the conviction of the present writer that the Epistle is to be seen *par excellence* as a Christian writing, and that its basic background is therefore the thought and experience of the early Christian church. This general judgement says nothing of cultural milieu and nothing of particular affinities within early Christianity. Nevertheless, to fail to appreciate this fact would be to miss that element in the Epistle which is key to its understanding.

The method pursued here has of necessity involved selection, both in the general areas considered and in the particular points reviewed. The aim has been to present sufficient material under each head to see where the evidence seems to point. To this end the present writer has sought to be fair and critical to all points of view including his own, preferring a solution which is cautious and tentative to one which tailors the evidence to fit some simple solution.

Three general areas seem to warrant consideration – Philonism, the Qumran literature and early Christianity. It is not suggested by this three-fold division that these areas are mutually exclusive, but that current studies indicate that all of these have bearing on the subject in hand.

I. Hebrews and Philonism

Certain facets of the Epistle to the Hebrews, such as the concept of the shadow and the real, have led some writers to the conclusion that this Epistle has fundamental connections in form and thought with Greek Philosophy, notably Platonism. Such connections, however, do not seem to have been direct,¹ but are viewed as having been mediated through Philo, the Alexandrian Jew. A close examination reveals that even here no easy connection is possible. For this reason, the different facets of evidence need to be weighed with care in a manner which keeps all in perspective.

(a) Allegorism

Philo's allegorical exegesis is to be seen against the background of the method which the Greek philosophers had already applied to overcome the tension between their two noble traditions. To question or doubt the religious heritage embodied in the writings of Homer and Hesiod was looked upon as an irreligious or atheistic act. Yet the strong philosophical tradition from Thales on and the "historical" tradition of such as Thucydides and to some extent Herodotus, with their principles of logic, criticism, ethics, religion and science, could not accept much of the religious tradition as it lay in the written documents. The stories of the gods, and the writings of the poets, then, were not to be taken literally, but were to be seen in terms of a secret (which was in fact the real) meaning. The devices by which the real meaning was to be apprehended seem to us quite artificial, but in seeking to understand the method it must be borne in mind that they were genuinely and seriously trying to hold the two traditions together.

The Alexandrian Jew faced a similar tension between the Sacred Scriptures and the Greek philosophical tradition (especially the Platonic and Pythagorean). There were at least three conditions which determined that a passage of Scripture had to be interpreted allegorically – if it says anything unworthy of God, if it is contradictory with some other statement or in any other way presents a difficulty, and if the record itself is obviously allegorical in nature.

Within this framework a number of devices form the basis of allegory:

- (a) Grammatical peculiarities indicate that there is a deeper spiritual truth underneath the record – *cf. Leg. Alleg. I. 97ff*, where the LXX rendering of the Hebrew infinitive absolute in Gen.2.16 becomes the occasion for an excursus on the way in which the soul of the good man is nourished.
- (b) Stylistic elements of the passage may indicate that deeper truth is present. Hence, in *ibid.* iii. 169ff, the parallelism of *οὗτος ὁ ἄρτος* and *τοῦτο τὸ ῥῆμα* in the LXX of Gen.16.15b,16a – though the original certainly implies no parallelism of sense – leads to a consideration of the Logos as the food of the soul.
- (c) Punctuation, words, meaning of words, and combinations of words can be manipulated so as to extract new and deeper truth from the passage – this is illustrated by the previous passage.
- (d) Whenever symbols are present they are to be understood figuratively, not literally. In itself this principle may be quite sound.
- (e) Spiritual truth may be found in the etymologies of proper names. A good example of this is to be seen in the whole treatment of the four rivers of Gen.2.10-14 in *Leg. Alleg. I. 63-87*. Concerning the Euphrates, he has these significant words, "But the subject of the passage is not the river, but amendment of character" (*ibid.*, 85).
- (f) There seems to be a law of double-application by which many natural objects signify spiritual things. This leads to a system of symbols which, as against the proper interpretation of figurative language of (d), are brought into the interpretation even in those places where the literal meaning is obviously intended. One only needs to mention the very lengthy discussion evoked by the number seven in the creation story (*De Opif. 89ff*).

¹ R. Williamson, "Platonism and Hebrews", *SJT*, 16, 4, p.418.

With these considerations, however, it must be stated that Philo does not scorn the literal sense (τό ρητόν, *Leg. Alleg.* II, 19 – though here they must be understood as μυθῶδες – cf. *De Vit. Cont.* 28), the obvious (φανερὸς, *De Abr.* 200) or most natural meaning (φυσικώτατόν, *Leg. Alleg.* III, 16). Indeed, on one occasion, he even states, “Here his literal statement and his symbolic interpretation alike claim our admiration” (*ibid.*, II, 14). However, in general, it is the hidden, rather than the literal or obvious, sense which is given the primary importance (cf. *De Opif.* 157).

It is clear from these considerations of Philonic allegorism that Hebrews does not have allegorical exegesis of this kind. C. Spicq has concluded that “if he has borrowed from (Philo) this or that biblical theme or hermeneutical process, he has determinedly repudiated his allegorical, subjective and superficial method, so as to achieve a reading which was profoundly religious and singularly more penetrating than all those that had been hitherto been proposed.”² While this may be affirmed of Hebrews in panoramic view, there are particular cases to which closer attention must be given. One thinks notably of the treatment in Hebrews of the Melchizedek theme.

From the outset it must be noted that the two writers make quite different use of Melchizedek. It may be significant that the term ἀμῆτωρ, a New Testament *hapax legomenon*, is used by Philo – though in a reference to Sarah (*De Ebr.* 61), not to Melchizedek. It may also be significant that in describing Melchizedek, king of Salem, Hebrews uses language quite similar to that of Philo – “Melchizedek, too, has God made both king of peace, for that is the meaning of ‘Salem’, and his own priest” (*Leg. Alleg.* III, 79). However, on proceeding beyond this point, the significance of these correspondences is considerably weakened. In Hebrews, Melchizedek is presented as a prefiguration of Christ and is therefore important as a person, though the scanty references to him tend to be filled out in terms of Christ. In Philo, he is the manifestation of the Logos and is set in contrast to the Ammonites (whose mother is sense-perception) and the Moabites (whose father is mind). Spicq has the pertinent comment that “for Philo, the Pentateuch is a manual of psychology and a catechism of morality.”³

More important than similarities, however, is the hermeneutical method used, the question at this point being more precisely whether this method is allegorical in the Philonic sense. It is surely this latter point which must be borne in mind rather than the question of whether some distinction should be seen between typology and allegory.⁴ It does indeed seem clear that there is a distinction between the method in Hebrews and Philonic allegorism – a distinction which, as will be seen, seems to justify the use of such clear and decisive terms as typology and allegory – but such a distinction should be made after it has been shown to be warranted.

The strongest suggestions of allegorism in Hebrews seem to come from (a) the importance placed on the silence of Scripture, and (b) the spiritual truth to be found in names. However, their collective force is not very strong. What is intended in 7.3 is not as clear as might first be thought. Thus, Arndt and Gingrich note under both ἀμῆτωρ and ἀπατωρ that these words may indicate that there is no genealogy recorded for Melchizedek in the Old Testament, or may ascribe to him some heavenly origin or being.⁵ With regard to ἀγενεαλόγητος, Büschel sees the primary reference to priestly regulations and so “without having derivation in the human series, in this case as a priest. How important descent was for priests on Jewish soil may be seen from *Ezr.* 2:61-63; *Phil. Spec. Leg.* I, 110ff; *Jos. Ap.* I, 30- 37; *Ant.* 11,31. That all those who wished to discharge priestly functions were examined as to their descent is attested by *Mid.* 5,4; *T. Sanh.* 7,1; *Qid.* 4,4.”⁶ R.C.H. Lenski has argued that Melchizedek is viewed as lacking everything that a Jewish priest had to have. Not only was the normal genealogy to be preserved, but the female line of descent also was safeguarded. “All these regulations concerning parentage, genealogy, time of birth and time of death, and children born to continue the priestly line, all of which were so essential for the Aaronic priests, were

² C. Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, I (Gabalda, Paris, 1952), pp.63-64.

³ *Ibid.*, II p.207. H.W. Montefiore, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (A. & C. Black, London, 1964) considers that Hebrews follows Philo's exegesis of the inner meaning of the name, but otherwise, “our author's exposition of Melchizedek is highly original” (p.117).

⁴ R.P.C. Hanson seems to be side-tracked at this point – *Allegory and Event* (S.C.M., London, 1959), p.89. But note J. Héring, *L'Épître aux Hébreux* (Delachaux & Niestlé, Neuchâtel, 1954), p.9.

⁵ *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (C.U.P., Cambridge, 1957), *loc.cit.*

⁶ G. Kittel (ed. – tr. G.W. Bromily, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* Vol. I (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1964), p.665.

completely absent in the case of Melchizedek. The idea is not that he had no father and no mother, no ancestors and no descendants, no day of birth and no day of death.”⁷

The basic question, therefore, is what is deduced from the silence of Scripture at this point. Even when consideration is given to *ἀφωμοιωμένος*, the intended point of likeness to “the Son of God” needs to be sought – even here it is the continuance of his priesthood (*cf.* the quotation from Ps.110.4) in contrast to the Levitical priesthood (7.4ff). It seems hardly right to say, as does B.F. Westcott, “The comparison is not between Christ and Melchizedek, but between Christ and the isolated portraiture of Melchizedek,”⁸ as if the portrait of the latter is intended to convey truth concerning the person of the former. Some early exegetes regarded Melchizedek as a christophany, and Westcott has not escaped from all the difficulties associated with this view. The comparison, surely, is of **priesthoods** rather than of **persons** or their portrait. This fact is seen the more clearly when it is realised that our Lord is not presented as having no human connections (witness v.14), while the fact of his death is seen as of paramount importance both in this Epistle and in primitive Christian tradition generally. Thus, the inferences from the silence of Scripture do not at all seem to be allegorical in form.

As for point (b) above, the author of Hebrews has taken only what seems obvious and proceeded no further. There is no elaboration, such as we would find in Philo, of “righteousness” and “peace”, these being fitting attributes of the one who is described as priest-king. *Δικαιοσύνη* is alluded to in this Epistle in relation to the Son (1.9), though there is no specific reference to *εἰρήνη*. The two characteristics, however, were strongly embedded in Messianic expectation, and the casual way in which they are mentioned here is highly improbable in a strictly allegorical method.

One further omission is noteworthy. A number of later writers have drawn out the reference in the Genesis account to bread and wine in terms of the Christian sacrament of the Lord’s supper.⁹ It is to be expected that the allegorical method would attach significance to such a detail as this. Notably, however, the use of Melchizedek is simple and restrained. Since Hebrews does not engage in the quest for hidden meanings, rating these above the obvious, but does use the thought of historical progression, there seem good reasons for describing its method as typological rather than allegorical, typology being understood as the exegetical method by which an event, series of circumstances or aspect of the life of an individual or nation is seen to find a parallel and deeper realisation in the incarnate or heavenly life or ministry of Christ. Further aspects, however, must be considered later in reference to alleged similarities to Plato’s Theory of Ideas.

(b) Use of the Septuagint

Another feature for comparison is the use the writer makes of the Septuagint. Although attention is focused here on background rather than on authorship, the attitude to the Septuagint, the text quoted and the manner of citation will all bear on the author’s relationship to the Alexandrian tradition.

Spicq has this note regarding the text of quotations from the Old Testament, “Ordinarily, the New Testament writers cite the Old from memory, or rather, are not concerned about literal fidelity; so much so that one could upbraid them – and St. Paul in particular – for citing texts in the wrong sense. In this respect, the Epistle to the Hebrews represents a remarkable originality. It reproduces long texts of Scripture – it contains the longest quotation in the New Testament (8.8-12) – and in a manner so generally exact that one is entitled to think that it copies a manuscript and is not content with reminiscence.”¹⁰ This latter point is rightly not pressed, but must remain a strong possibility. However, of even greater importance here is the fact that, as Spicq goes on to say, “his quotations are made according to the Greek version of the LXX, even where there is not corresponding text in the Hebrew original (1.6 = Dt.32.43). Not only does our author, unlike St. Paul, never seek to come back to this original by parting company with the LXX, but even where

⁷ *The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Epistle of James* (Wartburg, Columbus, 1946), p.212.

⁸ *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Macmillan, London, 3ed 1903), p.175. H.W. Montefiore (*op. cit.*, p.119) considers the writer is using the Alexandrine principle of the silence of Scripture and concludes that the author is concerned “with the words of the Scriptural story, not with the historical person of Melchizedek himself.”

⁹ *cf.* Westcott, *op. cit.*, p.202; J. Moffatt, *Epistle to the Hebrews* (T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1924), p.xxxiii.

¹⁰ *op. cit.* I, p.334.

this version is in disagreement with the Hebrew, it is the Greek of the LXX which is always reproduced.”¹¹ This last statement, however, is too categorical, as is shown by close examination of Spicq’s references at this point. It has some truth in reference to 2.6-8 (Ps. 8.4-6), 10.5 (Ps. 40.6 – BSA), 10.37-38 (Hab. 2.3,4 – a suggested textual emendation in Kittel’s *Biblia Hebraica* would approximate to the LXX) and 12.15 (Dt. 29.18 – BA). However, in 1.10-12 (Ps. 102.25-27), 6.14 (Gn. 22.17) and 12.26 (Hag. 2.6), there appears to be no outstanding variation from the Hebrew text. Further, in 1.7 (Ps. 104.4) the LXX is a possible rendering of the Hebrew, though the weight of scholarship would render the nouns as in the RSV – interestingly *φλόγα* of this Epistle is closer to the textual emendation taken in the RSV, while *φλέγον* of the LXX is closer to the present Hebrew Text; in 3.7-11 (Ps. 95.7-11), it is to be noted that the LXX uniformly renders מַסָּה (Massah) as *πειρασμός* except in Dt.33.8, where it has *πεῖρα*, and that מֵרִיבָה (Meribah) is most often rendered *ἀντιλογία* (Num. 27.14; Dt. 32.51; 33.8; Ps. 81.7; 106.32 – also *λοιδορήσις*, Ex. 17.7, and *λοιδορία*, Num. 20.24), the only “proper name” form being found, not in the original account, but in the *μαριμωθ* of Ez. 48.28, a plural form following the Hebrew plural of Ez. 47.19;¹² in 11.21 (Gen. 47.31), the LXX reading (*ῥάβδος* = מַטֵּה = staff) takes a possible pointing of the Hebrew text as against the Massoretic pointing (מַטֵּה = couch = Gk. *κλίνη*), the LXX here corresponding to the Old Latin and the Syriac. Attention should be drawn to 10.30 (Dt. 32.35 – *cf.* Rom. 12.19) where the quotation differs from the LXX and is closer to the Hebrew! Thus, while the general purport of Spicq’s statement may be acknowledged, caution must be exercised not to press it too far. For example, while the writer adheres fairly closely to the LXX in 8.8-12 (Jer. 31.31-34) even to reproducing the plural *νόμους μου* where the Hebrew has the singular מִצְוֹתַי (though there is a question of the text of the LXX used here), the author can equally give quite a free translation of the same passage, as in 10.16-17.

This leads to the further question of the particular text of the LXX used in the Epistle. As this is a rather complex issue, a summary of conclusions rather than an exposition of the problem is needed. (i) In some cases the Epistle differs from all known texts, though these variations do not remove the general impression of fidelity to the LXX (as in 2.12 = Ps. 22.22; 9.20 = Ex. 24.8; 10.5-10 = Ps. 40.6-8; and the free quotation of 12.20 = Ex. 19.13). (ii) In cases of variants between extant texts of the LXX, the writer of the Epistle seems most to follow A (note, for example, the agreements of 8.9,10 with A against B), though there are occasions when he agrees with B against A (as in 1.6 = Dt. 32.43, not in the Hebrew text). There seems little point in supposing that he sometimes uses a different version of codex A.¹³

A number of points need to be made concerning the manner of citation, as this is somewhat distinct from the general practice of New Testament writers. On a number of occasions, Paul makes reference to the person whose words he quotes (*cf.* Rom. 4.6; 9.27,29, etc.). On the only occasion in Hebrews where a similar practice might be inferred (4.7) there is a dispute as to whether the person or the psalter, the “book of David”, is intended – the latter contention is strengthened if *ἐν* is to be seen as referring to place rather than to instrumentality. Whatever the conclusion here, 4.7 puts primary emphasis on the divine source rather than on the human agent. This is true of all direct quotations except one where God is directly addressed, and there the words are pointedly vague (2.6 – *διεμαρτύρατο δὲ πού τις*). In two instances the Holy Spirit is particularly named as the speaker (3.7; 10.15; *cf.* 9.8) – in both of these the words are also quoted as words of God. In a larger number of cases *ὁ θεός* is more expressly mentioned or implied (1.5,7,13; 5.5; etc.). This is the more striking, as some of the instances are not by prophetic intent evidently the words of God (1.6; 4.4; etc.). It is noteworthy that the common form of citation, *γέγραπται*, is not used in this Epistle except within an Old Testament quotation (10.7 = Ps.40.7).

A consideration of Philo at these points makes it clear that no simple relationship can be established. While the writer of Hebrews seems in general to be following the LXX, this by no means approaches the extreme fidelity of Philo to this version. Thus, one finds, for example, the LXX of Gn. 2.1-7 reproduced verbally in *Leg. Alleg.* I, 1-3,6,16-19,21,27,28,31, with only minor variations in vv. 2a, 3b, and 7a.

¹¹ *ibid.*, pp.334-335.

¹² The LXX form testifies to the plural reading, though Syriac, Targum and Vulgate prefer the singular. Whatever the conclusion textually, this and other occurrences of the word suggest that Meribah tended to be regarded, not simply as a proper name, but as a signal instance and hence almost a principle of strife and rebellion. Thus, the descriptive name “Meribah” is first used of the contention at Rephidim (Ex. 17.7) but it comes later to be used even more often to describe the event near Kadesh-barnea (Num. 20.13). The use of Massah, however, is more often restricted to the event at Rephidim.

¹³ As Spicq, *op. cit.*, I, p.336.

Whatever may be indicated by way of general Alexandrian background, a specific Philonic one cannot be pressed at this point. By way of scope, however, it is to be noted that Philo concentrates greatest attention on the Pentateuch, the next in importance being the Psalms. Pentateuch and Psalms predominate also in the direct quotations in Hebrews, though more evenly balanced, but if allusions are taken into the reckoning the Pentateuch figures more strongly. In introducing quotations Philo has no hesitation in referring the words of quotations to their human author, although he has the text of the LXX in such high regard. It is true that he links quotations by *καὶ πάλιν*, as does the author of Hebrews, but so do other New Testament writers (cf. Rom. 15.9-12). It is true that *μαρτυρέω* in the sense of a divine attestation in an inspired scripture (Heb. 10.15) occurs many times in Philo (as in *Quod. Det.* 48,52,121), but this usage is not unique to Philo among the profane authors. Spicq has this comment, “If Hebrews and Philo ordinarily quote the LXX from the Alexandrine tradition while St. Paul is more according to the textual type of the *Vaticanus* and at times has recourse to the Hebrew original, it is notable that our two authors in quoting Gn. 2.2 introduce the same variant *ὁ θεὸς ἐν*, and above all that the Biblical references of Heb. 13.5, which does not correspond exactly to any text of the LXX, should be identical with that of *De Conf.* 166.”¹⁴ However, it has been evident that reservations must be entered against Spicq’s protasis, though these matters are plainly of such note that they must be considered along with other evidence.

(c) Vocabulary

An examination of the vocabulary of Hebrews reveals 139 words peculiar to the Epistle (excluding those brought into the Epistle by quotation from the LXX). Of these only 23 are used more than once in the Epistle, while probably about the same number (though not the same words) are of particular doctrinal importance. Of this latter group, about ten may be found in the writings of Philo. From these initial considerations alone, it will be appreciated that the material under this head is of great complexity and that these deliberations cannot lead to a simple solution. A full study would demand consideration of the use of all words, noting variations and concurrences with other New Testament usage on the one hand and with extra-Biblical usage on the other. It would, moreover, include phrases, idioms and other stylistic features. Such a comprehensive study cannot be attempted here. C. Spicq has a reasonably close study of these points,¹⁵ and his linguistic analysis is valuable, even though one may have to differ from conclusions drawn from it.

However, there is value in giving some consideration first to alleged Alexandrianisms in general in the Epistle.¹⁶ While *ἐνάρστος* of 13.21 is found in Wisd. 4.10; 9.10, the word is found more frequently in the Pauline writings than in Hebrews with a grammatical structure following that of Wisd. 4.10 – there does not appear to be any particular facet of meaning involved. Although *κατασκευάζω* is used in both Heb. 3.3,4 and Wisd. 7.27; 9.2 etc. for the creative activity of God (in the latter, especially by “wisdom”), it is also found in this sense in Is. 40.28; 43.7; 45.7. Similarly, with *παραπίπτω* (6.6), a New Testament *hapax legomenon*, the uses in Ezekiel outweigh the two occurrences in Wisdom. The case of *ἀπαύγασμα* (1.3) is somewhat different, since its use in Wisd. 7.26 is a LXX *hapax legomenon* and it also occurs in Philo (*De Opif.* 146, cf. also *De Somn.* I, 85,116,23; *De Spec. Leg.* IV, 123).

These references are quite striking. The Wisdom passage sees Wisdom as “the *ἀπαύγασμα* of eternal light, the untarnished mirror of God’s working, the image (*εἰκὼν*) of his goodness.” The description of Christ as the *εἰκὼν* of God belongs to Paul (2 Cor. 4.4; Col. 1.15). There may perhaps be a parallel in Heb. 10.1, where the law is called the *σκία* rather than the *εἰκὼν* of the good things to come – “law”, “wisdom” and “reason” can be regarded as analogous. The reference in *De Opificio Mundi* describes humanity’s relation to the divine reason (*λόγος*) as being a copy (*ἐκμαγεῖον* – a word found in neither LXX nor New Testament, alluding to the impression of a seal and hence of similar force to *χαρακτήρ* of Heb. 1.3) or fragment or *ἀπαύγασμα* of that blessed nature.¹⁷ While the thought of Hebrews uses this metaphor to point to a particular person in the history of salvation, the similar use of this metaphor is quite outstanding. The

¹⁴ *ibid.*, I, p.42.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, I, pp.41-53.

¹⁶ Cf. A. Nairne, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (C.U.P., Cambridge, 1917), pp.cx-cxii.

¹⁷ No consideration has been given here to the important lexical question of whether *ἀπαύγασμα* should be taken in an active (as “radiance”) or passive (as “reflection”) sense.

word, *ἐκβάσις*, is only found in Wisdom in the LXX and there always signifies “outcome” (8.8; 11.14; more specifically the outcome of someone’s life in 2.17) and so parallels the usage in Heb. 13.7. In the other New Testament use of this word (1 Cor. 10.13), it has rather the sense of “way of escape”. The phrase, *μετανοίας τόπος*, (Heb. 12.17), a New Testament *hapax legomenon*, is also found once only in the LXX (Wisd.12.10), the sense being the same in both cases. However, there needs to be recognised here the Latin legal expression, *locus poenitentiae* (so Vg; cf. Pliny, *Ep.* x, 97), to which Acts 25.16 provides a parallel (*τοπὸς ἀπολογίας*). Thus, it can be seen that, while these and other phrases are consonant with an Alexandrian background and sometimes provide quite remarkable parallels, they do not provide any conclusive evidence.

There are, however, words and phrases in common between Hebrews and Philo having no parallel in the LXX, and consideration must now be given to some of these. Such is the expression *ἐξ ἀνάγκης καὶ* (Heb. 7.12) which is used in Philo to introduce a necessary consequence (*De Aet.* 52, 149; *Quod Deus* 13, 28; cf. *Leg. Alleg.* III, 200). The necessity implied in the *ἐξ ἀνάγκης* of 2 Cor. 9.7 is moral rather than logical.

The apparent redundancy of *ἀρχιερεὺς μέγας* (Heb. 4.14) is found in the use of the phrase by Philo in reference to the *λόγος* (*De Somn.* I, 214, 219; II, 183). It is quite possible, however, that the phrase is not taken either from Philo or from 1 Macc. 13.42, but is a special designation applied to Christ by way of distinction – other *ἀρχιερεῖς* were not so in an absolute sense. With this may be placed the parallel *τὸν ποιμένα τῶν προβάτων τὸν μέγαν* of 13.20.

Neither *δημιουργός* nor its cognates is used in the LXX version of the Hebrew Scriptures, and their use in the rest of the LXX does not show a favourable sense. This, however, should leave the use of the Epistle open to a good sense, even by reference to God (11.10) – there can hardly be said to be a precedent against the good sense. The word was accepted readily enough into early Christian phraseology about the creative activity of God (as, e.g., in 1 Clem. 20), though it fell into undesirable use in the Gnostic system. It may be that the way was prepared for the Christian use of this term by Plato (*Rep.* VII, 530a and elsewhere) through the mediation of Philo who associates it with *τεχνίτης* (as in *De Mut.* 29,31).

While *ἱκετήρια* (Heb.5.7), a New Testament *hapax legomenon*, is used in the LXX in Job 40.27 and 2 Macc. 9.18, it is not used there of supplication to God. It is only here and in Heb. 7.26 that this Epistle makes reference to prayer, and it is odd that one of the more common Greek expressions for prayer found in the New Testament should not have been used. Philo, however, seems to have a preference for this word and its cognates (cf. *De Vit. Mos.* I, 72, 101, 185). Hebrews, it must be admitted, does not supply sufficient evidence to demonstrate any preference at this point.

Nor, again, is there sufficient evidence to show from 1.1 that Hebrews has a predilection for alliterations with *πολυ-*, as Philo is alleged to have. The five-fold alliteration in *π-* in this verse is striking, though the use of the device by others than Philo prevents any categorical assertions.

Although it has not been possible to give full consideration to many points, the evidence has shown many similar words and phrases, some quite striking in their similarity, between Hebrews and the Alexandrian tradition in general and Philo in particular. However, useful though this evidence is, it cannot furnish any direct proof or indication of the relationship between Hebrews and Philo.

(d) Thought-Forms

More important than vocabulary in establishing background is the fabric of the writer’s thought. Two important aspects will be considered here – the Platonic theory of ideas and the Logos doctrine.

J. Héring makes the assertion, “Like Philo, our author accepts a kind of philosophical and cosmological framework which is much more Platonic than Biblical. The succession of two aeons (the present aeon and the aeon to come), a standard conception in Judaism and in primitive Christianity, is replaced by the superimposition of two coexistent planes: the suprasensible world and the world of phenomena. The first contains the eternal ideas, which the second endeavours to reproduce in matter. It is the first that is Heaven for Philo, as for our epistle. This conception has a similar consequence for the two authors: they speak very little of the bodily resurrection of the dead, because the ideal world is essentially

incorporeal. Our author mentions it only once, and in passing, as a teaching given to beginners (6.2), and the silence concerning the bodily resurrection of Jesus should be explained in the same manner.”¹⁸ Héring’s presentation of this point of view sets out clearly the issues under consideration. Mention has already been made of the particular typology of the Epistle and the question of its relation to the Platonic theory of ideas foreshadowed.

The four words used in this Epistle to express the relation between the old and the new are *ὑποδείγμα* (8.5; 9.23), *σκία* (8.5; 10.1), *παραβολή* (9.9; cf. 11.19), and *ἀντίτυπος* (9.24). In 10.1, at least, *σκία* is used chronologically rather than contemporaneously – *i.e.* it has an eschatological force. Further, this chronological dimension to a great number of contrasts which as a feature of this Epistle emphasises the writer’s apologetic, rather than philosophical, motive. The contrasts between the new and the old revelations (1.1-2), between Moses, the faithful servant, and Christ, the Son (3.5-6), between Joshua who did not give the people of God rest, and Jesus who has already entered this rest (4.8ff.), between the Levitical priesthood and that of Melchizedek (7.1ff), between the old and the new covenants (7.22; 8.6-13), between the old and new sanctuaries (9.1-12), between the old and the new offerings (9.13-14) – all of these have some chronological force. In some there is also present an element which transcends time. This seems clearly true of the sanctuary (with reference to which the word *τυπός* occurs by way of quotation from the LXX – 8.5) and possible the offerings. It is also true to a certain extent of the priesthoods, though two strands are evident – Melchizedek delineates the sharp contrast of the two priesthoods, yet in a sense the priesthood of Christ is like the old priesthood (5.1-10), emphasising the historical in the priestly ministry of Christ. In the above contrasts, while there is a structure of thought involving copies and shadows and the reality of the better things, these latter seem forcibly related to historical realities.

The “One who is Son” (1.2),¹⁹ is seen, not simply as one of divine stature, but as the one in whom at the end (*ἔσχατοι*) of these days God has spoken. This revelation is an historical event by means of an historical figure. While the contrast between Moses and Jesus could lend itself to a more general interpretation, it seems likely that his faithfulness (3.2) is that of his earthly ministry – a moral lesson is being drawn, to which his humanity and historical life are important (2.10-18). This element also appears in the contrast between Joshua and Jesus (note 4.15-15). Melchizedek is not presented as a concept of “higher priesthood,” but as an historical person, despite the little known of him (7.1-2), and, as noted above, the historical in the priestly ministry of Christ is emphasised in this context. The “better covenant” has Christ as its present mediator (8.6), but is sealed by an historical event, his death (9.11-15ff). While the “true tabernacle” (8.2) seems most clearly to be a heavenly reality existing contemporaneously with the earthly sanctuary, and whatever the offerings of that tabernacle, the sacrifice involved was accomplished in history “once for all” (*ἄπαξ* – 9.26,28; *ἐφάπαξ* – 7.27), the entry into the holy place “through his own blood” was also “once for all” (*ἐφάπαξ* – 9.12), and the “offering of the body of Jesus Christ” (whether this be on the cross, or in the heavenly tabernacle) was likewise “once for all” (*ἐφάπαξ* – 10.10).²⁰

¹⁸ *op. cit.*, p.10; cf. V. Taylor, *The Person of Christ in New Testament Teaching*, (Macmillan, London, 1958), p.90.

¹⁹ B.F. Westcott, *op. cit.*, p.7.

²⁰ The question of the place of the concept of “offering” in the thought of Hebrews is an important one. C. Spicq conceives of a “heavenly liturgy” and states, “For the author of Hebrews, a priesthood without sacrifice is inconceivable, and he would never have introduced this sacrificial offering into the definition of a priest (cf. 5.1; 8.3) if there was no sacrifice in heaven, especially as he considers the priesthood of Christ as essentially a heavenly priesthood” (*op. cit.*, I, p.312). However, it hardly strictly correct thus to limit the priestly work of Christ – for instance, 4.14 seems to indicate that “Jesus, the Son of God” was “great high priest” before passing through the heavens. T.C.G. Thornton (“The Meaning of *αἱματεχυσία* in Heb.ix.22” *JTS*, xv, 1, pp.63-65) has argued with some cogency that *αἱματεχυσία* refers, not to the slaying of the victim, but to the application of the sacrificial blood to the altar to effect atonement. This would give point to 9.12, but, if so, it is still a once-for-all act (9.25-26), and the central purpose of his priestly ministry is “to appear in the presence of God on our behalf” (v. 24). There is no indication that the “pouring out of blood” must be seen in terms of some heavenly act. W. Stott (“The Conception of ‘Offering’ in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *NTS*, 9, 9, pp.62-67), after careful linguistic study, concluded that “any idea of our Lord as offering himself or his blood, on a heavenly altar is quite absent from this Epistle. If there is such a conception in the New Testament, it is not in this writer’s mind.” He sees the thought as that Christ, having finished his expiatory work, has commenced his royal work, seated at the right hand of God (cf. David in 2 Sam. 7.1ff). The question has here been left open, though it is noted that this last has much to commend it.

On this examination, it is not possible to assert categorically that the writer works from broadly Platonic philosophical presuppositions²¹ even as these may have filtered through a more general background. The comments of R. Williamson on 8.1,5 with reference to a direct Platonic background seem to have considerable relevance – “Plato’s Ideal world is not a heaven that could be entered even by Jesus; it can be penetrated only by intellect. And there is no room among the Ideas for one who was prepared to humble himself and become flesh in the world of men and phenomena; and the crucial point which the Author of Hebrews wishes to stress is that Jesus who at a particular time in history became a real man and lived a full and authentic human life, entered into the ‘true tent’ at the completion of his work on earth, the climax of which was the consummation on the Cross of his perfect obedience, holiness and love (a strongly un-Platonic note in the contrast).” There is here a “contrast between a historical situation in the past and one which succeeded it *in time*”.²² These comments are just as pertinent when Philonic influence is more directly under consideration. It is at this point that the distinction between “allegory” and “typology” has relevance. Philonic allegorism does not involve “an historical, a real correspondence”²³ between the things compared. More particularly, the lack of the eschatological element in Philo should be noted, a most important aspect of the thought-structure of the writer of Hebrews.²⁴

For C. Spicq, the concept of “the living word of God” (4.12-13) is decisive in establishing dependence of Hebrews in relation to Philo.²⁵ His careful study reveals the following points:

- (1) ζῶν ὁ λόγος has a parallel in the λόγια ζῶντα compared by Philo to the living vigour of seen and emphasised as having power and purifying brightness (cf. *Leg. Alleg.* III, 127-128, 150);
- (2) this hymn to the Word of God is parallel to the hymn to the glory of the creative word in Philo (*De Sacrif.* 65-66) whose power of penetration is beyond comparison (*De Decal.* 35);
- (3) the office of discrimination of this transcendent word in Hebrews (τομώτερος ... καὶ διϊκνιούμενος) is borrowed from the specifically Philonic concept of the λόγος τομεύς, which is the prime cause of the multiplicity of forms and things in the world (cf. *Quis Rer.* 130-132),²⁶
- (4) both authors compare the word to a cutting sword (cf. *De Cerub.* 28,30);
- (5) the Biblical *hapax* τραχηλίζω is often used by Philo in the sense of “subdue, compel,” especially in reference to the one who seizes an adversary by the neck, and often in a metaphorical sense (for this latter, cf. *Leg. Alleg.* III, 109);
- (6) a number of references in Philo witness his concept of things being naked before God (*Leg. Alleg.* II, 53; III, 157);
- (7) “the effects of penetration of the divine word in Heb.4.12-13 can only be understood in terms of the Philonian anthropology,” i.e. of a dichotomy between “soul” (ψυχή) and “spirit” (πνεῦμα) in the nature of man (*Leg. Alleg.* I, 31-41; *Quod Det.* 80-84; *Quis Rer.* 55);
- (8) the rhetorical conclusion may be paralleled from Philo (*Quod Det.* 13), though the form is used by other writers also.²⁷

However, despite this careful study, it does not seem that these arguments lead of necessity to a conclusion of dependence. It is not at all clear that λόγος is used in this passage in a Philonic sense,²⁸ though

²¹ As M. Dods, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* in *The Expositor’s Greek Testament* Vol. IV (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1909), pp.238-239.

²² *SJT*, 16, 4, p.419.

²³ B.F. Westcott, *op. cit.*, p.202; cf. G.W.H. Lampe and K.J. Woollcombe, *Essays on Typology* (S.C.M., London, 1957), pp.67-68; R.V.G. Tasker, *The Old Testament in the New Testament* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2ed 1954), pp.106-107.

²⁴ Cf. C.K. Barrett, “The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews” in W.D. Davies and D. Daube (eds.), *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology* (C.U.P., Cambridge, 1956), p. 366ff.

²⁵ *op. cit.*, I, p. 50.

²⁶ H. Clavier notes, “One can estimate the great part that his (Philo’s) Judaism has played in bringing into focus this remarkable function of the Logos, which thought as well as spoken remains indefectibly the supreme agent and sovereign judge of logical, natural and moral distinctions” – “ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ dans L’Épître aux Hébreux” in A.J.B. Higgins (ed.), *New Testament Essays. Studies in Memory of T.W. Manson* (Univ. Press, Manchester, 1959), pp.83-84. Cf. F.W. Farrar, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (C.U.P., Cambridge, 1888), p.39.

²⁷ Spicq, *op. cit.*, I, pp.51-53.

F.C. Grant considers that “it is only a step to such an identification.”²⁹ He continues, “Through his inspired word (the scripture) God speaks to men, lays bare their thoughts, makes them aware of their own purposes, quickens their consciences; no one can escape its penetrating power or the all-discerning gaze of the God who thus sees and speaks.” If, as Grant suggests in the same context, “the Logos-concept underlies the author’s theology,” it is clearly necessary to ask, What Logos-concept? The word *λόγος* is only used with reference to God’s speech or revelation and the proclamation or application of this (2.2; 4.2; 5.13; 6.1; 7.28; 12.19; 13.7,22), a similar conclusion applying also to the use of *ῥήμα* (6.5; 12.19). No particular interpretation of the forms in 4.13 and 5.11 can alter this interpretation, while the occurrences of *ῥήμα* in 1.3 and 11.3 are quite explicable in terms of the Old Testament concept of God’s word (as in Gn.1.3).³⁰ Although particular activities of the Logos in Philo are applied to the Son (as the agent of God in creation, the revealer of God from the beginning of the world, etc.), the direct identification of the Son with the Logos is never made, and even in 1.1,2 a broader frame of reference is evident. The relation of this to Pauline (as Col.1.15ff) and Johannine (as Jn.1.1ff) thought will be considered later.

To return to Spicq’s particular points, it must be stressed that Old Testament thought as a whole emphasises Yahweh as distinct from other so-called gods because he is the “living God” (*cf.* Hos. 1.10) and his word accomplishes his purposes (*cf.* Is. 55.10). Spicq is too hasty in pointing Philonic parallels to the passage and too often ignores the possible common background of both writers in the Old Testament. Is. 49.2 is significant – “He made my mouth like a sharp sword...” (*cf.* Ps. 57.4; 149.6 – *ρομφαίαι δίστομοι*, LXX; note also Rev. 1.16 *etc.*). By this interpretation, of course, “the Word of God” is viewed in concrete Hebrew terms, rather than in metaphysical Hellenistic terms. If this is so, there can hardly be anything “specifically Philonic” in the discriminatory function of God’s word in judgement. Such it can only be if a prior judgement has been made relating the present use to the Logos in Philo’s sense. However, “the Word” is here rather the word of judgement than of creative activity, as so often in this discriminatory role in Philo. While it is true that Philo often uses *τραχηλίζω* in a metaphorical sense, in no case cited is it used in a developed, non-metaphorical sense (*i.e.* without the vivid pictorial imagery of its primary sense) of “lay bare” as before an omniscient God, as here. Further, Spicq himself rejects the rendering “subdue, compel” in his commentary on the passage.³¹

Spicq’s references in Philo for *γυμνός* show indeed that he used the word in a metaphorical sense, but do not point convincingly to Philo as the background here. The LXX uses of *γυμνός* in Job 1.21; 26.6 (cited by Spicq), and Eccles.5.14 provide a parallel to Philo’s use. For the thought of Hebrews, a closer parallel is 1 Sam.16.7. The Philonic parallels for the division of soul and spirit are more striking. The Hebrew terms tended to be somewhat fluid, though in general “spirit” (רוח) may be regarded as the animating principle in relation to which “soul” (נפש) is the living being. There is not sufficient evidence in the Hebrews passage to demonstrate beyond a doubt that a clear-cut Philonic distinction is envisaged, since attention is focused, not on human psychological structure, but on the judgement of the word of God on the inmost recesses of our being, even the “thoughts and intentions of the heart.” No literal division is in view. The tentativeness of this last point Spicq himself has acknowledged. From these considerations, then, it can hardly be maintained that this passage is “decisive” in establishing dependence on Philo, though at a number of points evidence would be consonant with Philonic background if such could be shown conclusively on other evidence.

²⁸ Cf. J. Héring, *op. cit.*, p.46; M. Dods, *op. cit.*, p.281; F.C. Grant, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Eyre & Spottiswoode, London, 1957), p.8.

²⁹ *ibid.*, p.29.

³⁰ H.W. Montefiore has this note, “Our author is doubtless aware of Alexandrine speculations about the *Logos*, and to some extent he borrows his language from these sources. The background of his thought, however, is fundamentally biblical, although it is often expressed in Alexandrian language. Here, for example, the word of God does not need Philo’s *Logos* for its explanation (any more than it needs the *Memra* of the Targums). It is rather a development of the Old Testament conception of the Word of the Lord” (*op. cit.*, pp.87-88); “For Philo... the *Logos* is the principle of differentiation in the universe, but for our author it represents the dynamic activity of the omnipresent God” (*ibid.*, p.89).

³¹ *op. cit.*, II, p.90.

(e) Summary

None of the evidence considered thus far provides conclusive proof that Hebrews stems primarily from an Alexandrian background. The exegesis is typological rather than allegorical in a Philonic sense, though it comes nearest to the latter in considering Melchizedek. However, whereas Philo tends to regard the Old Testament as a framework for his philosophical ideas, the author of Hebrews treats history literally (as in ch.11). It is for this reason that his consideration of the shadow and the real may be more in line with eschatological thought than with the Platonic theory of ideas, even as this tended to become a commonplace of philosophy.

The Old Testament is approached, not with Greek philosophical presuppositions, but rather with the Christian presupposition that all has been fulfilled in Christ. The use of the LXX suggests, but does not prove, an Alexandrian origin.

The linguistic evidence provides some remarkable parallels, though this evidence also falls short of being conclusive. Individual parallels do not show that Philonic terminology was woven into his thought-forms, nor that he used it by conscious reaction against a Philonic training. It cannot, further, be asserted that the Logos-doctrine of Philo is clearly present.

It must be noted, however, that Hebrews exhibits a degree of literary style not apparent elsewhere in the New Testament and this points to definite training.³² The most that can be asserted at this stage is that the author's Hellenistic background equipped him to express his material in this form, though the basic substance may be more integrally related to Christian tradition than to this background.³³

³² Note F. Blass and A. Debrunner (tr. and rev. R.W. Funk), *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament* (C.U.P., Cambridge, 1961), §485 – “artistic prose”; G.L. Archer, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Baker, Grand Rapids, 1957), p.4 – “cultivated, literary diction and rhetorical polish which sets Hebrews in marked contrast to all of the other N.T. books.”

³³ C.K. Barrett (*op. cit.*) comes to a similar conclusion.

II. Hebrews and Qumran

The discovery of scrolls near Khirbet Qumran in 1947 and subsequent years has sparked off a great deal of speculation concerning the origins of Christianity. Some superficial study has arrived at conclusions that Christianity is merely an offshoot of Essenism, it being generally thought that the Qumran community must have close affinity with the Essenes. More serious study of the Qumran literature, however, has provided valuable information concerning a dissenting group within Judaism before and during the time of Christ.

Whether or not the Qumran community was Essene, information concerning the latter has been preserved only in the writings of Philo of Alexandria, Pliny the Elder, and Flavius Josephus, all record of the life and teaching of the sect having been effectively cut off from the main stream of Judaism. Hence, besides the interesting question of the relation of the Qumran community and the Essene sect, the scrolls provide details of the life and teaching of a Jewish community outside the main stream of Jewish tradition yet forming part of the total background against which Christianity emerged.

In particular, this has had significance for the study of those New Testament books which scholarship has tended to view in terms of late Hellenistic influence, as it has given evidence of the existence within Palestine from the earliest days of Christianity of a developed kind of thought which, from basic Hebrew thought-forms, may more satisfactorily illumine the background of these writings. For this reason, the Scrolls demand close consideration in assessing elements in the background of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

(a) Biblical Exegesis

Among the documents discovered at Qumran have been a number of fragments of Biblical commentaries, and these, along with the other works, exhibit a particular method of Biblical interpretation.¹ The divine revelation is thought of as consisting not only of the divine mystery (רִי) here seen as revealed in Scripture but also of the interpretation (רִשְׁוֹנָה – cf. Dn. 4.9). Thus the interpretation has remained hidden until the appearing of God's chosen interpreter, the Teacher of Righteousness, whose function is to expound aright God's Law. Thus, in the Habakkuk commentary on 2.1,2, this comment is made, "God told Habakkuk to write down the things that were to come upon the latter age, but he did not inform him when that moment would come to fulfilment. As to the phrase, *that he who runs may read*, this refers to the teacher who expounds the Law aright, for God has made him *au courant* with all the deeper implications of the words of his servants" (1QpHab vii.1-5).²

From this it appears not only that the meaning of the revelation is imparted by the Teacher of Righteousness but that the words of the prophets had in fact a primary reference to the latter age in which the community believed themselves to be living. It is in this sense that the divine revelation is incomplete until the Teacher brings its necessary רִשְׁוֹנָה. Thus, Habakkuk's references in 1.6ff to the Chaldeans (כַּדְרָיִם) must in fact refer to the Kittians (כִּיְתִיִם) – possibly a reference to Rome (cf. Dn. 11.30), or to the Seleucids (1QpHab ii.12ff.).³ Examples of this could be multiplied. Bruce comments, "These persons and events were understood to belong not to the time immediately following the prophetic pronouncements but to the time immediately following the rise and activity of the Teacher of Righteousness."⁴ This method of interpretation as exemplified in the Habakkuk commentary demands the fragmentation of the text so that in its various parts it may be referred to the new situation. Further, since the original historical situation seems to be of little account in any case, the transition to allegorism is an easy one, a method especially ready to hand where the text was

¹ Cf. F.F. Bruce, *Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran Texts* (Tyndale, London, 1960); W.H. Brownlee, *The Meaning of the Qumrân Scrolls for the Bible* (O.U.P., New York, 1964), ch.4.

² Quotations are from T.H. Gaster, *The Scriptures of the Dead Sea Sect* (Secker & Warburg, London, 1957), standard reference abbreviations, however, being used.

³ F.F. Bruce, *op. cit.*, pp. 22ff; Bruce, *The Teacher of Righteousness in the Qumran Texts* (Tyndale, London, 1956), pp. 10-11; H.H. Rowley, *The Teacher of Righteousness and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (John Rylands Library, Manchester, 1957), p. 127ff.

⁴ *Biblical Exegesis*, p.10.

fragmented. Thus, “Lebanon” in Hab. 2.17 refers to the Communal Council, and the “beasts” to “the simple-minded Jews who carry out the Law” (1QpHab xi.17ff). T.H. Gaster is probably right in suggesting that “the point of the interpretation lies in the fact that the members of the Brotherhood wore white,”⁵ and this tends to emphasise that the interpretation is allegorical.

W.H. Brownlee has suggested that this type of commentary should be called *midrash peshet* to indicate affinity with the exegetical method of the old Jewish commentaries, yet to distinguish it from other types of Jewish *midrash*.⁶ However, the usefulness of this classification is doubtful, since *midrash* is hardly a rigidly defined method of exegesis, and the double terminology only tends to cloud the differences. Superficially there is often a similar form with the scriptural quotation or phrase followed by its interpretation. However, the Qumran *pesharim* are marked out by their strong eschatological emphasis and by a more definitive presentation. Midrashic exposition, on the other hand, sees a multiplicity of meanings in each word of Scripture, gained through a process of progressive interpretation. For this reason the views of a number of Rabbis may be cited and even set in debate where there is disagreement. The *midrash halakhah* hence becomes the reading of the “oral traditions” back into the *Torah*, thus demonstrating their Mosaic origin and establishing their authority. The parabolic aspect of *midrash haggadah* seems to be completely missing from the Qumran commentaries.

It has been suggested that the method of exegesis in the Epistle to the Hebrews has striking parallels with the *peshet* method of Qumran. F.F. Bruce has thought that the most striking parallel related to Hab. 2.3f.⁷ In the Habakkuk commentary, the passage is referred to those who will know God’s deliverance from the house of judgment because of their continuing obedience to the Law and their faith in the Teacher of Righteousness (1QpHab vii.6ff). In Heb. 10.37-39, it is referred to those who “have faith and keep their souls” in waiting for the coming one. Bruce has suggested that the application might be rendered in *peshet* idiom thus:

For still the vision awaits its time; it hastens to the end – it will not lie. If it seem slow, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay. Its interpretation concerns those who look for the return of the Messiah; the appointed time is very near, and the faithful ones wait in hope for him to come.

Behold, he whose soul is not upright in him shall fail. Its interpretation concerns the apostates, who no longer wait for the Messiah; and because they draw back, God is displeased with them and they are on the way to perdition.

But the righteous shall live by his faith. Its interpretation concerns those who wait in hope, who do not draw back like the apostates, for they are righteous, and because they are strong in faith they will save their souls.⁸

However, while there is a *peshet* type of **application** exhorting continued faith in their spiritual leader who has for them eschatological significance, this rendering shows the extent to which the *peshet idiom* is absent.

What calls for close consideration here, however, is the relation of ch. 11 to this exegesis. The need to see this in terms of the continuity of the argument is clear,⁹ but, while there are some developments of thought throughout this chapter, basically it seems related as a whole to 10.37-39. The particular section of exhortation in the Epistle begins at 10.19. The progress of thought is that, having confidence to enter into God’s presence by virtue of Christ’s better sacrifice and having a great priest over God’s house, we are to enter fully into this experience, holding fast to our confession; this is the more important when we consider how serious is deliberate apostasy and how severe a punishment it deserves; but early in your life as Christians you endured suffering, proving that you could hold fast; so, do not throw away your confidence now but press on to receive the promise; the prophet, seeing the imminence of the coming one, urged that God’s righteous one lives by faith, and does not shrink back; now this refers to us, who are not among those who shrink back to destruction but among the people of faith whose soul is preserved – indeed, many in former times have lived and even died holding on to faith in God’s promises which they believed he would sometime fulfil; but now, having received these better things promised, we are encouraged by these who

⁵ *op. cit.*, p.253.

⁶ *op. cit.*, p. 64; cf. E.E. Ellis, *Paul’s Use of the Old Testament* (Oliver & Boyd, Edinburgh, 1957), pp. 139-147.

⁷ “‘To the Hebrews’ or ‘To the Essenes’?”, *NTS*, 9, 3 (Apr. 1963), p.221.

⁸ *Biblical Exegesis*, pp. 82-83.

⁹ Cf. J. Moffatt, *op. cit.*, p. 158; H.W. Montefiore, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

have lived by faith (but especially by Jesus, the greatest example of all, on whom faith depends from start to finish) not to lose heart but to press on with endurance – your sufferings will, in fact, equip you the better to run the race of faith.

From this analysis, the primary function of ch. 11 in the development of this exhortation is clear. It is not an *excursus* on the subject of “faith”, but an amplification of 10.39, especially of *πίστεως* which, if not actually a periphrasis for “those who have faith”, certainly designates a class having this quality. In this view, 11.1 is to be seen as a description of the practical results of faith¹⁰ rather than as a definition of faith.¹¹ The contents of ch. 11 are summed up in 12.1 with *νέφος μαρτύρων*, and the exhortation moves on to adduce the supreme example of Jesus – he who is more than just an example, but is faith’s *ἀρχηγός* and *τελειωτής*. Yet they are not being urged to Christian heroism of some quasi-Stoical kind. In the case of Jesus, suffering led to joy and a sitting at God’s right hand. They too must look beyond the present suffering of sonly discipline to the peaceful fruit of righteousness which it produces (c. 11). There thus seem to be good grounds, in considering the type of exegesis used in 10.37-39, for including ch. 11 in this consideration.

There does not seem to be any parallel to this in the Qumran literature discovered so far. J. Héring considers that the number of Semitisms in ch. 11 make it possible that the author has used a Jewish *midrash* eulogising the pious men of the past and that Sir. 44-50 provides a comparison.¹² The parallel is of importance as providing background for the collation of a number of Old Testament characters, though it is hardly strictly a *midrash*. C. Spicq sees this enumeration of historical examples as a classical rhetorical procedure of antiquity,¹³ though, as he himself notes, Biblical parallels may be adduced (Ezek. 20; Neh. 9.6ff; Pss. 78, 105, 106, 135, 136). One might further mention the example of Stephen’s defence in Acts 7. The parallel is remarkably close if it is remembered that for rhetorical reasons it would have been impossible for Stephen to state at the beginning the passages which seem to be implied as the basis of this exegesis – such as “you are a stiff-necked people” (Ex. 33.3) and “The Lord, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place; but they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, till the wrath of the Lord rose against his people till there was no remedy” (2 Chron. 36.15-16ff). There are a few examples of *midrash* in which a number of Biblical examples are brought to mind (*cf.* ‘Ab. Zar. 24b ff). The feature of Stephen’s speech and of Heb. 11, which is missing from the examples of *midrash* and from Ecclesiasticus, is their eschatological progression. The examples of hard-heartedness move forward to a signal example of faith in the faith of Christ who is in fact the author and finisher of faith. This eschatological note is in keeping with the Qumran literature, though in Qumran exegesis historical significance seems to be lost in eschatological fulfilment. In Heb. 11 they are kept together.

However, it is important to consider the use made of Old Testament quotations in the Qumran texts apart from the commentaries. J.A. Fitzmeyer has analysed such quotations in some detail,¹⁴ and it will be of more use to deal with his conclusions than with this detail. He groups the quotations into a number of classes. Two of these are of interest here, the class of “modernised texts” and the eschatological class. Fitzmeyer uses the former term in preference to the designation “typological” to refer to texts which are used of some new event on the contemporary scene. “A situation is found in the Old Testament which is analogous to the new one and the two are linked by a common element in such wise that the old one sheds light and meaning on the new and invests it with a deeper significance.”¹⁵ The majority of New Testament examples cited are from Hebrews.¹⁶ The references in the Damascus document, however, evoke again an earlier comment, for it seems that “the old one” loses its own meaning in the process of “shedding light and meaning on the new.” There is no hint that a situation was found in the Old Testament analogous to a contemporary situation – the Old Testament reference was meant primarily for this contemporary situation. This is seen clearly in reference to such a passage as the one describing the works of Belial (CD iv.12ff).

¹⁰ C. Spicq, *op. cit.*, II, p.336.

¹¹ R.C.H. Lenski, *op. cit.*, p. 372.

¹² *op. cit.*, p. 104.

¹³ *op. cit.*, II, pp. 334-335; *cf. ibid.*, pp. 19-21.

¹⁴ “The Use of Explicit Old Testament Quotations in Qumran Literature and in the New Testament,” *NTS*, 7, 4, pp. 297-333.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 309.

¹⁶ *ibid.* p. 316n.

Some of Fitzmeyer's references in Hebrews could be viewed similarly (as 1.5, 8-9, 10-12, 13 *et al.*), but it must be insisted that in others (as 3.7-11) the regard of Hebrews for historical setting of what is fulfilled in Christ is evident. The regard for historical setting is, however, present in a reference set in the eschatological class (CD vii.10-12), though this is necessitated by the text quoted (Is. 7.17). The eschatological emphasis of the Qumran community has already been noted. There is a strong relation of this in Hebrews to what may be called "typological". Thus, Fitzmeyer's references to Hebrews under the eschatological class (10.30, 37-38) may be readily augmented from his references under what he terms "modernised texts" (notably 8.8-12). However, the concept of the covenant merits fuller consideration later. What may be noted here is that, while Fitzmeyer has shown that the Qumran literature has classes of quotations which may be found in the New Testament, the comparison is a broad one and, in fact, the broad use of these classes in the New Testament cautions against an easy conclusion of the dependence of Hebrews specifically on a Qumran type of background.

Fitzmeyer has also given consideration to the introductory formulae used in the Qumran literature. These have similarities with the usage of the New Testament as a whole, especially in the designation of the Old Testament as "Scriptures", with phrases parallel to the common New Testament introduction, *γέγραπται*.¹⁷ However, notably this phrase only appears in Hebrews by way of quotation from the LXX (10.5-7; Ps. 40.6-8). In the comparison with Philo, it has been noted that the method of quotation in Hebrews differs from the general practice of New Testament writers, Hebrews tending to emphasise the divine source of the words. Parallel uses in Qumran literature do not show any real parallel to this, as the words so quoted are always from passages already attributed to God in the Old Testament (*cf.* CD vi.13, viii.19).¹⁸ Other personal references of quotations are to the particular Old Testament personage concerned – as, for example, Isaiah (CD vi.7-8).¹⁹ The comparison with Heb. 12.21 – Moses to the people of Israel concerning Sinai, "I tremble with fear" (Dt. 9.19) – is no real parallel, for the latter could not be taken as other than a human reaction. This, however, is not the case in the Qumran references, which in a Hebrews background might easily have been directly attributed to God (*cf.* Heb. 1.6-12).

Perhaps of more significance has been the discovery of the use of *testimonia* by the Qumran community in their Messianic expectations. In particular, the document known as 4Q Testimonia contains the following texts – Dt. 5.28-29; 18.18; Num. 24.15-17; Dt. 33.8-11; and an elaborated version of Josh. 6.26. Except for the last these are without commentary, so that it is therefore possible that it is portion of another document.²⁰ The possible use of an early Christian collection of *testimonia* by some of the New Testament writers is a question of some importance.²¹ It has been more recently urged with special reference to the Epistle to the Hebrews by F.C. Syngé. He suggests that it is assumed that the readers agree that the passages quoted in ch. 1 refer to the Son and affirms, "The most satisfying answer to the last question [*i.e.* why the readers should thus agree with him] is this, that Hebrews has before him a collection of proof texts which was already an authoritative book in the Church."²² However, it seems rather tenuous to conclude that, as 1.6 seems to allude to Prov. 8.22ff and to follow this with a quotation from Dt. 32.43 LXX and as Justin Martyr, using proof-texts in the *Dialogue with Trypho*, does from Prov. 8 to Dt. 32, "it seems clear that the connection is not merely in the head of Hebrews: it is there in his Testimony Book!"²³

C.H. Dodd has rightly cautioned that the postulation of a document "outruns the evidence, which is not sufficient to prove so formidable a literary enterprise at so early a date."²⁴ The evidence points rather to the existence of a method of Biblical study involving the selection of certain large sections of the Old Testament scriptures, especially from the prophets and the Psalms, and the study of these as wholes on

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 300.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 301.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 302.

²⁰ W.H. Brownlee, *op. cit.*, p. 48; T.H. Gaster, *op. cit.*, pp. 353-355.

²¹ *cf.* C.H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures* (Nisbet, London, 1952), pp. 28-60; E.E. Ellis, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-107.

²² *Hebrews and the Scriptures* (S.P.C.K., London, 1959), p.2. Note M. Barth, "The Old Testament in Hebrews. An Essay in Biblical Hermeneutics" in W. Klassen and G.F. Snyder (eds.), *Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation* (S.C.M., London, 1962), p. 64 – "His method is nearer [*i.e.* than the *peshar* method] the *haraz* ('string of pearls') method of the rabbis, which in turn seems to be reflected among the Qumranites by the collections of *testimonia*".

²³ Syngé, *op. cit.*, p. 4

²⁴ *op. cit.*, p. 26.

intelligent and consistent principles as setting out the “determinate counsel of God” fulfilled in the gospel facts. This whole body of material formed “the starting point for the theological constructions of Paul, the author to the Hebrews, and the Fourth Evangelist.”²⁵

The Qumran *testimonia*, however, at least bear witness to the possibility of such a collection, though it must be asked to what extent these passages were actually regarded as *testimonia*. Certainly, they hardly figure clearly in the present texts as such, Num. 24.17 being quoted in two passages (CD vii.19-20; 1QM xi.6-7) and others not at all (though there is an allusion to Dt. 33.11 in 1 QH ii.5). Thus, even at Qumran there was a broad Scriptural reference, even though there seems to have been particular interest in Deuteronomy, the Psalms and the prophets (especially Isaiah). It may be noted that there are a considerable number of quotations from Dt. 32, a passage to which there a considerable number of allusions in the New Testament also (as in Rom. 10.19; 1 Cor. 10.20,22; Phil. 2.15; *et al.*). It is noteworthy that one of the fragments from cave 4 includes the longer text of this Song quoted in Heb. 1.6, known previously only in the LXX.²⁶

This evidence at least points to a broader background of the Epistle than was formerly acknowledged. The approach to and use of the Scriptures show that the exegetical methods of Hebrews may be related to a Palestinian background, though the parallels are not close enough to establish dependence. This type of approach to the Scriptures, however, may have had more influence in Jewish circles in the first century AD than is realised from the main stream of Jewish literature.

(b) Attitude to Sacrifices, Temple and Priesthood

Possibly the reason why the influences of Qumran thinking do not seem to have been preserved in the main stream of Judaism was because of their rigorous attitude to Temple worship and the Jerusalem priesthood. It seems clear that they did not reject animal sacrifices and a priesthood **in principle**, but protested against the evils and corruption of the Jerusalem *cultus*. It should be noted that this protest movement began with the Hebrew prophets, who were concerned on the one hand to reform sacrificial practice (as in Is. 1.11; Jer. 11.12; Ezek. 20.31; Hos. 4.13) and on the other to reform sacrificial theory, laying greater emphasis on ethical duty (as in Mic. 6.6ff; Hos. 6.6). Care must, therefore, be exercised not to overestimate the originality of the Qumran protest, while taking note of it as a particular protest movement in New Testament times.

Philo described the Essenes as being “primarily religious devotees, not by any cult of animal sacrifices, but in their resolve to maintain the sanctity of their minds” (*Quod Omn.* 75). It must be agreed with Matthew Black that this is a “simple negative”.²⁷ There is no amplification to indicate that they **repudiated** animal sacrifices, only an assertion that such cult was not part of their communal life and that they laid emphasis rather on sanctity. Josephus’ reference in the *Antiquities* is more pointed. Black renders the best-attested text, “In sending gifts to the Temple, they render up (their) offerings with superior purifications as they think. And for this reason they are excluded from the public precinct and give up their offerings by themselves...”²⁸ “Gifts” here are *ἀναθήματα*, a general term for offerings, while “offerings” (*θυσίαι*) are most usually animal sacrifices. On this understanding of Josephus, the group saw some duty towards the Temple, but avoided contact with the corrupt *cultus* of the Temple, perhaps tending to a spiritual interpretation of sacrifice.

The practice of the Qumran community affords a striking parallel to this. Thus, it is laid down that “No one is to send to the altar either burnt-offering or meal-offering or frankincense or wood by the hand of one suffering from any of the proscribed impurities, thus permitting him to render the altar impure; for Scripture says, ‘The sacrifice of the wicked in an abomination, but the mere prayer of the righteous is like an acceptable offering’ ” (CD xi.18ff). Black has suggested that it is these precautions with regard to the person conveying the offering which may be implied by the “superior purifications” noted by Josephus.²⁹ However,

²⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 126-127.

²⁶ F.F. Bruce, *NTS*, 9, 3, p. 221.

²⁷ *The Scrolls and Christian Origins* (Nelson, London, 1961), p. 39.

²⁸ *ibid.*, p.40.

²⁹ *ibid.*, p.41.

it seems necessary to conclude that the sacrificial system was actually regarded as being of much less importance to the Qumran community than Black seems to conclude from their practice of sending offerings to Jerusalem. This is seen quite clearly in the *Manual*, “When these things obtain in Israel, as defined by these provisions, the Holy Spirit will indeed rest on a sound foundation; truth will be evinced perpetually; the guilt of transgression and the perfidy of sin will be shriven; and atonement will be made for the earth more effectively than by any flesh of burnt offerings or the fat of sacrifices. The ‘oblation of the lips’ will be all justice like the erstwhile ‘pleasant savour’ on the altar; righteousness and integrity like that free-will offering which God deigns to accept. At that time, the men of the community will constitute a true and distinctive temple – a veritable holy of holies – wherein the priesthood may fitly foregather, and a true and distinctive synagogue made up of laymen who walk in integrity” (1QS ix.3-6). Black is at variance with Gaster’s translation here, rendering as if “expiation is assured through the flesh of holocausts and the fats of sacrifice”, this not excluding, however, “the spiritual sacrifices appropriate in such a community.”³⁰ S.E. Johnson agrees with Gaster’s interpretation, and comments, “The Manual of Discipline by itself does not prove that the members of the sect participated in the Temple sacrifices or refrained from them. The Damascus Document, which in all probability comes from the same group, denounces the contemporary cultus. When the Manual of Discipline uses sacrificial language it does so metaphorically.”³¹

The Epistle to the Hebrews hardly forms a close parallel to this kind of teaching. In no case is there allusion to the corruption of the *cultus*, only to its imperfection and transitoriness. Indeed, the regulations of divine worship (*δικαιώματα λατρείας*) were an integral element of the first covenant (9.1). It is only because they were thus an integral element that they could foreshadow the good things to come. The idea of animal sacrifices is not repudiated, though their effectiveness is limited to the purity of the flesh (*τὴν τῆς σαρκὸς καθαρότητα* – 9.13). The cleansing of the conscience is only possible through the better sacrifice, “the blood of Christ” (v. 14). This latter is not a spiritualised symbol, but an historical actuality, Christ having died “once for all” (*ἐφάπαξ*). Thus, the new covenant is founded on the perfect sacrifice. Ps. 40.6-8 is quoted in 10.5-7, but is not used to set “sacrifice and offering” in contrast with the spiritual sacrifice of obedience (as in 1QS ix.4-5). Rather, the sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin-offerings offered according to the Law are set in contrast to the once-for-all offering of the body of Jesus Christ. This involved obedience, because it was a self-offering (*cf.* 5.8), though the “one sacrifice for sins” (10.12) is hardly just his obedience, this being but a part of his total self-offering. There is no repetition of this sacrifice, but his followers are called upon to offer to God through him “a sacrifice of praise” (*θυσίαν αἰνέσεως* – *cf.* Lev. 7.12, LXX), evidently seen as a thank-offering, and to be diligent in doing good and sharing, for God is pleased with such sacrifices (13.15,16). Although this final chapter is generally acknowledged as an authentic part of the Epistle, it gives the impression of an appendix, setting out some final practical exhortations after the conclusion of the main development of thought.³² This focuses attention all the more on the central place of the self-sacrifice of Christ. There is no longer any question of corrupt sacrificial system, for the perfect sacrifice has taken place. The spiritual sacrifices to which Christians are called are not a corrective to the evils of a system, but derive their meaning from the perfect sacrifice (note 13.12,13). The practices of the Qumran community offer striking parallels to this concluding idea of spiritual sacrifices in Hebrews, but instead of being “not very far, after all” from it,³³ it is here suggested that it is “quite some considerable distance away, nonetheless” in this passage is seen in relation to the teaching of the whole Epistle.

With regard to the Temple itself, the Qumran community does not appear to have been against it in principle. Their return to the desert was a separation from the rest of society, but does not seem to have involved a rejection of the Temple in favour of the tabernacle.³⁴ In Hebrews, there is no reference to the Temple (*νάος*), but consistently to the tabernacle (*σκηνή*). The explanation of this can hardly be that the

³⁰ *ibid.*, p.43. O. Cullman agrees with this, citing as further support IQM 11.5-6, vii.11 – “A New Approach to the Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel” in *ET*, LXXI, 2, p.39.

³¹ “The Dead Sea Manual of Discipline and the Jerusalem Church of Acts” in K. Stendahl (ed.), *The Scrolls and the New Testament* (S.C.M., London, 1958), p.137.

³² *Cf.* J. Héring, *op. cit.*, p.121 – “(a) Contrary to the rest of the epistle, its moral prescriptions are joined with one another rather badly, no more are they connected well to the end of chap. 12; (b) it adds nothing new; (c) only in this chapter does the author speak as if he was really writing a letter.”

³³ S.E. Johnson in K. Stendahl (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.137.

³⁴ *Cf.* F.F. Bruce, *NTS*, 9, 3, p.299.

Temple had been destroyed and the *cultus* had ceased, otherwise a number of passages in Hebrews would be sheer anachronism (as 8.4-5; 10.1-2).³⁵ One wonders whether it is really a sufficient explanation to assert that the writer is not alluding to an existing *cultus* and Temple, but is merely quoting from the LXX. Thus, Moffatt writes, “He never refers to the temple... It is the tabernacle of the pentateuch which interests him, and all his knowledge of the Jewish ritual is gained from the LXX and later tradition. The LXX is for him and his readers the codex of their religion...”³⁶

There are other factors which suggest that the reference to the tabernacle may be deliberate. The people of God are portrayed as being “strangers and sojourners” (11.13). Their promised land is not Palestine, but a heavenly country (v.16); and the city they are seeking is not the earthly Jerusalem (vv. 9, 10, 16). Indeed, although they had gained approval through their faith, yet they did not receive what was promised (v.39). To this corresponds the statement that the children of Israel were not given “rest” by Joshua (4.8).³⁷ There is no clear or strong statement against the Temple, though “tabernacle” would plainly be the more congruous with this view of the people of God. This principle is extended, moreover, to the people of God after the time of Christ. Although they live in the time of better things, “the best” remains as a promise into which they must be diligent to enter (4.1, 9-11). Furthermore, even as the bodies of the sacrificial animals were burnt “outside the camp” (the nomadic setting), so Jesus suffered “outside the gate” (specifically the established city³⁸), and his followers must go out to him “outside the camp”, not having a lasting city, but seeking that to come (13.11-14).

H. Koester may be right in seeking 13.12-13 as formulated in conscious contrast to Lev.16.28,³⁹ but is exceeding the evidence in concluding that “outside the camp” is in fact “the worldliness of the world itself and the place where men are exposed to the experience of this world rather than secluded and protected from it”.⁴⁰ One does not deny this as an element in the exhortation of Hebrews both here (“bearing his reproach”) and elsewhere (as in 10.32-33). However, a strong contrast with Judaism is certainly implied (note 13.10), and if vv. 13 and 14 are taken together it is clear that the very reason for our going “outside the camp” is that we know ourselves to be “strangers and exiles on the earth”. The perfect sacrifice did not take place in the Temple, nor yet within an earthly tabernacle. So Christians, without lasting city and hence without temple, but also outside the camp with no earthly tabernacle, are to offer up to God their sacrifices of praise, thanksgiving, well-doing and sharing. To use Koester’s terms, there is here a kind of “worldliness” rather than the “unworldliness” of Qumranian detachment – it is within the activities of the world that the reproach is to be borne and the spiritual sacrifices offered to God. But this must be kept within the perspective of an evaluation of the things of this world as transitory – a feature of the desert community, though not rigidly worked out with reference to the Temple and its *cultus*.

The Qumran scrolls express forthrightly the community’s attitude to the Jerusalem priesthood. One of the greatest opponents of the Teacher of Righteousness was the Wicked Priest. This latter term (הַרְשָׁע הַכֹּהֵן) seems clearly to be a pun for the Chief Priest (הַכֹּהֵן הַרְאָשׁ).⁴¹ While there seems to have been one outstanding occasion when the Wicked Priest exhibited his hostility toward the Teacher of Righteousness (1QpHab xi.4ff), it may also have a wider reference than just one person, involving condemnation of the whole Jerusalem priesthood. This wider reference is explicit in 1QpHab ix.4-7 – “(Hab. 2.8a), this refers to the final priests of Jerusalem who will amass for themselves wealth and gain by plundering the people but whose wealth and plunder will ultimately be delivered into the hands of the Kittaeans, i.e., ‘the rest of the peoples’.” However, the idea of a priesthood is not spiritualised, but there is expectation of a purified priesthood. As in Ezekiel’s vision of the restored Temple (as in 40.46), it is “the sons of Zadok” who are acceptable priests. This designation is made with reference to Ezek. 44.15 in CD iii.21ff, while it is stated to refer to “priests that still keep the Covenant” in 1QS v.2. The former of these two references may possibly have an extended meaning related to the community as a whole, but the latter points to the existence of priests within the community (cf. 1QS vi.8). Indeed, “The priests alone are to have authority in all judicial

³⁵ Cf. J. Héring, *op. cit.*, p.13; C. Spicq, *op. cit.*, I, p.255; B.F. Westcott, *op. cit.*, pp.xlii-xliii.

³⁶ *op. cit.*, p.xvi; cf. also p.xxii; T.H. Robinson, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1933), p.115.

³⁷ C. Spicq, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 95ff.

³⁸ *ibid.*, II, p. 427.

³⁹ “ ‘Outside the Camp’: Hebrews 13.9-14” in *HTR*, LV. 4 (1962), p. 300.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 302.

⁴¹ Cf. W.H. Brownlee, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

and economic patters, and it is by their vote that the ranks of the various members of the community are to be determined” (1QS ix.7).

The Epistle to the Hebrews does not seem directed against the corruptions of the priesthood, but against its inherent imperfection. The reference to the high priest being himself beset with weakness (5.2) is by way of contrast rather than of criticism. It could not have been otherwise – this is why Christ, while experiencing all the frailty of the Aaronic priest, belongs to the superior order of Melchizedek (5.1-10). As far as the earthly priesthood is concerned, the writer can designate it equally as Aaronic or as Levitical (note especially 7.11). Ezekiel seems to have had general condemnation for the Levites, except the sons of Zadok (44.10-16). There is no indication that Hebrews uses the term “Levitical” in any restrictive sense other than that imposed by the normal requirements for priests. Note 7.5 – “the sons of Levi who receive the priest’s office” (*cf.* Ezek. 44.22; Neh. 7.63-64). However, no matter what the order of the earthly priesthood, the coming of Christ does not merely involve the typological **fulfilment** of the former priesthood but a **change** of priesthood (7.12). Thus, the usage of Hebrews may at most indicate that the question of whether the priesthood is to be regarded as Levitical, Aaronic or Zadokite is quite irrelevant to the writer’s thought. The focus is on the superior Melchizedekian priesthood, a royal priesthood. Again, Hebrews shows little of a specifically Qumran background.

Mention must be made here of the attempts to see some relation between Hebrews and Qumran in the light of comparisons with John the Baptist and Stephen.⁴² For Cullmann, the Scrolls open the way to the understanding of what he calls “non-conformist Judaism,” which can account for what were thought to be late Hellenistic elements in the Fourth Gospel and in Hebrews. His thesis is worked out in relation to the Fourth Gospel, but he considers that the Epistle to the Hebrews “is in every respect closely related to the Johannine literature and must very probably be attributed to the same group”.⁴³ His line of argument has three steps, showing a relation between John and Stephen’s group, the Palestinian Hellenists, a relation between John and non-conformist Judaism and a relation between this non-conformist Judaism and Stephen’s group. It is worked out with respect to one theme – the opposition to (or, rather, spiritualisation of) the Temple worship.

The relation between the Fourth Gospel and the Hellenists is seen in the spiritual approach to worship in the discourse with the Samaritan woman (Jn 4.20-24). This is parallel to the attitude of Stephen, and the reference of v. 38 (“others have laboured, and you have entered into their labour”) is taken as a prediction of the Samaritan mission, established by the Hellenist Philip (Acts 8). Cullmann considers that Stephen asserts that the construction of the Temple was the height of Israel’s resistance to the divine law (Acts 7.47ff).⁴⁴ One may note here that “the tabernacle of testimony” was made according to the pattern which Moses had seen (v. 44), and there is reference to this same point in Hebrews (8.5), though it is by no means clear that *κεκλημάτιστα* is meant to imply a criticism of the later Temple. Again, in the Fourth Gospel it must be noted that, while the Word is described as “tabernacling” (*ἐσκήνωσεν*) in our midst (1.14), the Temple itself as the “Father’s house” is defended against the abuses taking place within its precincts (2.14ff). This has some similarities to the type of thought at Qumran as described above, but is hardly echoed in Hebrews. The point is that “As for the Essenes, we know that their attitude toward the Temple was not as favourable as that of the main body of Judaism, even if they did not go as far as the Christian Hellenists”.⁴⁵ This is of some significance, even though Hellenistic Christianity had further reasons for their attitude to the Temple.

While Cullmann does not insist that this polemic is found as such in Qumran, he considers it may have been prepared for by it,⁴⁶ and, while not insisting that the Hellenists were former Essenes, he asserts

⁴² O. Cullmann, “The Significance of the Qumran Texts for Research into the Beginnings of Christianity” in K. Stendahl (ed.), *op. cit.*; Cullmann, “A New Approach to the Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel”, *ET*, LXXI, 1 and 2; C. Spicq, “L’Épître aux Hébreux, Apollon, Jean-Baptiste, les Hellénistes et Qumrân,” *RQ*, 1, 3 (Feb. 1959), pp. 365-390. A similar line is followed by S.E. Johnson in K. Stendahl, *op. cit.*; Wm. Manson, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1951), pp. 30-36 *et al.*, sees direct dependence between Stephen’s message and the doctrine developed in Hebrews. M. Simon, *St. Stephen and the Hellenists in the Primitive Church* (Longmans, London, 1958) criticises Wm. Manson’s position (pp. 100ff), but himself concludes that “the Qumran sect was probably close to the Hellenists” (p. 91).

⁴³ *ET*, LXXI, 2, p. 41.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 1, p. 11.

⁴⁵ Stendahl (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 28.

⁴⁶ *ET*, LXXI, 1, p. 11.

that “they come from a kind of Judaism close to this group”.⁴⁷ M. Black has acknowledged the impressiveness of Cullmann’s case, but considers that his thesis may have been more convincing if the link with Qumran had been through the Hebraists.⁴⁸ However, Cullmann is not regarding “Hebrews” and “Hellenists” (Acts 6.1) as necessarily a linguistic distinction.⁴⁹ Further, the Acts references aside, it should be noted that “Hebrews” is hardly a normal designation for Aramaic-speaking Jews. Black has pointed out that “the designation, *Ἑβραῖοι*, was an archaic form of speech”.⁵⁰ This designation seems more suited to all we know of the Qumran community. It is just possible that, from the point of view of language, the members of the community might be known as “Hebrews”, and, because of some Hellenising tendencies, as “Hellenists”, though this term seems hardly compatible with their exclusive use of (or insistence on) the Hebrew language.

C. Spicq has taken a somewhat similar line, except that he also brings Apollos and John the Baptist into his discussion. Acts 19 relates that Apollos used John’s baptism and was only imperfectly instructed concerning the Holy Spirit. Some scholars have considered it a distinct possibility that John the Baptist was actually reared by Essenes when he was “in the wilderness” (Lk. 1.80), though not thereby confining John to the Essene mould.⁵¹ Although John spoke of the one coming after him baptising in the Holy Spirit, it is not clear that he fully understood the import of these words. The accounts in Matthew (3.7-12) and Luke (3.7-17) point to **judgment** as the key to this baptism, while Mark (1.7-8) and John (1.15, 26-27, 29-34) give no further indication as to what may be implied by Spirit-baptism. This could explain the misunderstanding of his disciples concerning the nature of this baptism announced by their master and also the conception of the Holy Spirit so little elaborated by Apollos and in Hebrews. The latter only conceives of the Holy Spirit as “inspirer of Scripture and source of the gifts of grace, not as agent of the Christian life”.⁵² It is further suggested that Apollos the Alexandrian could hardly have not frequented the synagogue which could not withstand Stephen’s wisdom (Acts 6.9-10), and that he could have been, if not converted, at least strongly impressed by the preaching of the first martyr. “One would best explain thus the evident affinities between the ‘discourse of Stephen’ and the ‘Epistle to the Hebrews’. The universalist conception of a very spiritual Christianity centred in the person of Christ, the exegeses of detail, the position adopted on the Temple and the relations of the old and the new covenant, are similar to such an extent that numerous authors have attributed to the Deacon the authorship of the Epistle”.⁵³ The Qumran community saw themselves in terms of the exile and exodus (1QS viii.11-13), this being proposed as the pattern for Christians in Heb. 3.7-4.11.

Spicq concludes, “The Epistle to the Hebrews, which is – for style, if not for vocabulary – the most Greek writing of the New Testament, is also one of two which have the most contacts with Palestinian Judaism. On the one hand, the Alexandrian culture of the author and his dependence with regard to Philo are certain; on the other, his centres of interest, his apologetic orientation, especially his exegeses, this or that point of morals, present notable affinities with those of the ‘exiles’ of Damascus or of Qumran”.⁵⁴ Spicq’s conclusion here is rather more balanced than that of Cullmann. The background of Hebrews is notably complex, and, while its many facets must be taken into consideration, no single facet seems to provide an adequate account of the background from which the Epistle emerged.

(c) Messianic Expectations

The Qumran community seems to have looked forward to three main figures – the coming prophet, and the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel.⁵⁵ It is especially with the latter two that we are concerned here. Thus, “Until the coming of the Prophet and of both the priestly and the lay Messiah (lit. “the Messiahs of Aaron

⁴⁷ Stendahl (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 29.

⁴⁸ *op. cit.*, p. 77.

⁴⁹ Stendahl (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 26.

⁵⁰ *op. cit.*, p. 78.

⁵¹ Cf. W.H. Brownlee, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

⁵² *RQ*, 1, 3, p. 368.

⁵³ *ibid.*, p. 369.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p. 389.

⁵⁵ F.F. Bruce, *Biblical Exegesis*, pp. 41-55; K.G. Kuhn, “The Two Messiahs of Aaron and Israel” in K. Stendahl (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 54-64.

and Israel”), these men are not to depart from the clear intent of the Law to walk in any way in the stubbornness of their hearts” (1QS ix,10-11). In 1QSa ii.11ff, the appellation “Messiah” is given only to the “Messiah of Israel”, who seems to be a royal person, though the text does not specifically call him “king”. T.H. Gaster considers that the term “Messiah of Israel” here “means no more than ‘the duly anointed king’”.⁵⁶ However, if it is true that this text is concerned with “the administration of the future ideal community of Israel,” as Gaster goes on to acknowledge, it must surely be taken to have more than general significance, to point in fact to an anticipated “Messiah”, a special “anointed one”. In this text, “the priest” is clearly the “Messiah of Aaron”,⁵⁷ and takes precedence over the “Messiah of Israel” in assembly and feast. This observation is not invalidated by the final clause – “this rule is to obtain at all meals where there are ten or more men present” – which extends the principle of the superiority of the “priestly” over the “royal”, for the principle is seen in terms of its messianic fulfilment.

Now, it should be noted that, while both “priest” and “king” in Israel were “anointed”, the developed Messianic concepts of later Judaism looked for a Messianic figure who was notably a king. Thus, the Synoptics bear witness to the current designation of the Messiah as “son of David,” a title which Jesus is recorded as expressly avoiding in all three (Mt. 22.41-46; Mk 12.35-37; Lk. 20.41-44). The term had become fraught with too much petty nationalism. The Qumran expectations stand in marked contrast to this. K.G. Kuhn has concluded from the section of 1QSa noted above, “The entire passage shows us with complete certainty the concept of two Messiahs: (1) the Messiah of Aaron, the high priest and head of the entire Congregation of Israel, and (2) the Messiah of Israel, the political leader, subordinate and second in rank to the former”.⁵⁸

In Hebrews Jesus is interpreted in terms of both priestly and royal (as exemplified in Melchizedek), the stronger emphasis being on the priestly. That he is thought of as the Davidic Messiah is quite clear. Heb. 1.5 quotes Ps. 2.7 – “Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee” – and 2 Sam. 7.14 – “I will be to him a father, and he will be to me a son.” The second of these clearly refers to the Davidic Messiah, being part of the oracle delivered by the prophet Nathan to David. Ps. 2 is likewise taken to be a royal Psalm. The same may be said of Ps. 45.6-7, quoted in Heb. 1.8-9, and of Ps. 110.1, quoted in Heb. 1.13. This latter passage was evidently commonly referred to the Davidic Messiah in New Testament times, as seems clear from Mk 12.35ff and parallels. There seems to be an allusion to this passage in Heb. 1.3, 8.1, 10.12, 12.2, and its importance is heightened by the use of Ps. 110.4 – “You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek”. There is some cogency in F.F. Bruce’s suggestion – “There was a sound historical justification for ascribing a priesthood of this order to the Davidic Messiah, for it is extremely probable that after David’s capture of Jerusalem he and his successors viewed themselves as heirs to the ancient royal priesthood exercised by Melchizedek and other pre-Israelite rulers of that city”.⁵⁹ However that may be, it is clear that Melchizedek is used because he represents both the priestly and the royal. In a real sense it might be said that “one man fulfils the roles of both Messiahs”.⁶⁰ However, it may be truer to say that the Messiah is conceived of as having a dual role. While the royal function of the Messiah is seen as Davidic, the priestly function is certainly not Aaronic. As noted earlier, while the sacrifices of the Law pointed to the perfect sacrifice of Christ, the priesthood of Christ is of a completely different order. Nonetheless, it is on this priestly function that Hebrews concentrates attention rather than on the royal function.

W. Stott has given careful linguistic study to the concept of “offering” evident in the Epistle. He considers that, in the heavenly role of our great High Priest, the expiatory work has been finished and the royal work begun.⁶¹ This royal work is an integral part of the work of the “priest after the order of Melchizedek”, the latter being both King and Priest. Christ is depicted as “seated” at God’s right hand and “appearing for us” (9.24); he is mediator of the New Covenant (9.15) and “ever lives to make intercession for us” (7.25). Stott points out that it was by no means usual for the priest to be seated for intercession, but that this was rather the royal posture for intercession, as is seen in 2 Sam. 7.1ff – a passage from which quotation is made in Hebrews as noted above. The Lord makes covenant with David through his prophet

⁵⁶ *op. cit.*, pp. 259-260.

⁵⁷ F.F. Bruce, *Biblical Exegesis*, p. 45; K.G. Kuhn, in K. Stendahl (ed.) *op. cit.*, p. 55.

⁵⁸ *ibid.* p. 57.

⁵⁹ *Second Thoughts on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Paternoster, London, 1956), p. 83; *cf.* *NTS*, 9, 3, p. 223.

⁶⁰ B. Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic* (S.C.M., London, 1961), p. 256; *cf.* H.H. Rowley, *The Qumran Sect and Christian Origins* (John Rylands Library, Manchester, 1961), p. 126.

⁶¹ *NTS*, 9, 1, p. 66.

Nathan. David's response is to go in and "sit before the Lord" (v. 19), there to claim the covenant promises (vv. 24, 26, 27, 29). Hebrews depicts a royal priest seated, as David was, before God, not pleading a sacrifice (the "cleansing" having been already accomplished – 1.4), but now seated in royal state and claiming the fulfilment of the Covenant promises for his seed.

This perhaps tends to oversimplify the situation, for the various concepts involved in Stott's considerations may not be used with the degree of exactness which he presupposes. Nonetheless, this study must be given due weight, and, for the present purposes, gives a useful clue to the concept of royal priesthood elucidated in the Epistle. The priesthood is avowedly not the Aaronic priesthood. This fact is made quite clear by the consideration that our Lord descended from the tribe of Judah, "a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests" (7.14), *i.e.* the royal tribe is not at all linked with the Aaronic or Levitical priesthood. However, as Stott has made clear, the king might at times be involved in some form of priestly role, though this was not within the scope of the special priestly ministrations. In Christ, the priesthood is not fulfilled but "changed" (7.12), and the Melchizedekian priesthood is not based on the law of a physical requirement but on the power of an indestructible life (v. 16). Yet, as noted above, Hebrews lays emphasis mainly on the **priesthood** of this royal person.

While it is clear that the Epistle's concept of a royal-priestly Messiah does not stem from the Qumran concept of the Messiah of Aaron and that of Israel, it must also be agreed with F.F. Bruce that "the argument of Hebrews is not specially directed against the Qumran conception of a priestly Messiah", but rather shows more generally the temporary nature of the whole of the order established in the wilderness days.⁶² Specifically anti-Qumran doctrine might have confirmed a Qumran background, but this is not present. However, Qumran may well have made a general contribution to the background at this point, by an emphasis on the priestly in Israel's destiny. For them, this meant the Aaronic priesthood and thus implied a Messiah distinct from the royal Messiah of Israel and superior to the latter. Hebrews approaches the matter from the conviction that the historical person, Jesus was the one expected Messiah – there is no indication that the writer has ever thought that there might be any more than one Messiah. For the majority of Jewish people, Messiahship meant kingship. Hebrews takes this expectation but concentrates attention on the priestly function of this royal Messiah, who was not (and could not be) an Aaronic priest because he was from the tribe of Judah, but is priest of a superior priesthood "after the order of Melchizedek". This concept may not have been totally strange to Palestinian readers as the expectation of a priestly Messiah was present in non-conformist Judaism, though its difference from the latter is quite marked.

(d) The New Covenant

The Qumran community seems to have seen its existence and function in terms of the New Covenant. Thus, the Zadokite Fragment speaks of "the men who entered the covenant in 'the land of Damascus'" (CD vi.19). The "traitors" have betrayed the New Covenant, not keeping faith with the Covenant of God, profaning his holy name (1QpHab ii.7ff). This Covenant theme occurs many times throughout the Qumran texts, but there is need to consider the extent to which it was thought of as being "new". Thus, T.H. Gaster asserts, "What was envisaged, however, was no 'New Testament' in the Christian sense of the term, no abrogation or substitution of the old Covenant, but simply a new affirmation of it. This was in accordance with the traditional Jewish view that the eternal Covenant is periodically reaffirmed and that the Pact concluded at Sinai was itself but a re-articulation of that which God had previously made, in their several generations, with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob".⁶³

However, while Judaism considered that the old Covenant was periodically renewed, this was not usually called a "new covenant". Indeed, Jer. 31.31ff which expresses clearly the concept of the "new covenant" expressly states that it will not be like the old covenant. Although the principle of the new covenant is still the Torah, it is now to be put within them and written on their hearts. This is more than a reaffirmation of the old covenant and seems to be in distinction to such reaffirmations. The same seems to be true to a certain extent of the Qumran community. It is true that a very great emphasis is laid on the Torah. However, the Torah is seen as expounded by the Teacher of Righteousness, and the whole situation

⁶² *NTS*, 9, 3, p. 223.

⁶³ *op. cit.*, p. 14.

of the community is seen to be eschatological, awaiting the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel. While in a number of respects the covenant seems little more than a reaffirmation of the old, it is nonetheless the covenant made in the last days with the faithful remnant (*cf.* CD xx.27-34). Furthermore, not only was the Jerusalem *cultus* a matter of protest and of dwindling attention, but a person had to enter into the covenant when he became a member of the community (1QS i.16ff), and the various ablutions and the sacred meal of the community took on, in practice at least, greater significance than the *cultus* even despite its corruption.⁶⁴ W.D. Davies has noted, “Thus the Qumran community is conceived as the faithful remnant, the true Israel, the community of the New Covenant: it seems to have experienced a divine sprinkling with cleansing water, the outpouring of a new Spirit – a kind of baptism of water and the Spirit. The community looked forward to a new Jerusalem and a new temple, where acceptable sacrifices would be offered by an acceptable priesthood”.⁶⁵

This is a more balanced view than that of Gaster at this point. However, the community’s approach to sacrifices should be noted as above. The system of animal sacrifices as such does not seem to have had very great importance, although it was not eliminated from their thought or practice. This would point quite forcibly to a more notably spiritual and moral interpretation of the Covenant than traditional Judaism came to acknowledge before the fall of the Temple. Of course, some degree of spiritualisation was beginning to take place within the synagogues of the Dispersion, although as long as the Temple and its *cultus* persisted this still tended very much to be focussed on the Temple *cultus*. Indeed, this is not seen as distinct from the Temple *cultus* as the doctrine and practices of the Qumran sect seem to imply. It could hence not come to be regarded as being particularly a “new” covenant. The separation of the Qumran sect and their New Covenant seem distinctive.

Hebrews also lays great emphasis on the New Covenant. The longest quotation in the Epistle is from Jer. 31.31-34 (8.8-12), but the idea of the New Covenant figures strongly throughout the Epistle. Attention only needs to be directed to the sections setting out the relation of the old and the new, considered with reference to Philo (see above p. 7ff). In Hebrews, the New Covenant is seen to be more distinctly “new” than the same idea at Qumran. The new is a “better covenant”, enacted on “better promises”, and mediated by the one who has obtained a “more excellent ministry” (8.6). Indeed, the old is becoming obsolete, growing old, and in fact is almost disappearing (8.13). Whereas the sanctuary of the first covenant set out the barrier between the worshippers and God (9.1-10), Christ, the high priest of “the good things to come”, set out by his perfect self-offering to remove the barrier of sin and a guilty conscience and so became mediator of a new covenant by which the called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance (9.11-15). The idea of “inheritance” leads the writer to think of *διαθήκη* in its sense of “will, testament” (vv. 16-18), though the idea receives so little consideration that it is probably to be seen just as an illustration of the connection between *διαθήκη* and blood, while the thought returns to the basis of the old covenant (vv. 18ff). The basis of the New Covenant is the person, sacrifice and priestly ministry of Christ. This is one notable instance where the concept of the New Covenant here differs so distinctly from that of Qumran. Despite the Teacher and the special mediators of the latter days, together with a spiritual and moral interpretation of the Covenant, the “Christian” orientation of Hebrews makes the latter radically distinct. The presence within Palestine of a body of “Covenanters” may have brought this element of thought to mind, though it is one of the strands of Old Testament teaching which one would expect the early Christians to seize and use in their expositions of the Way.

(e) Summary

The Qumran writings are valuable in the study of Hebrews, not because of any direct dependence which may be proved, but because they indicate a broader background of thought from within which Hebrews may have arisen. If a pure Philonism is inadequate to explain the background of thought lying behind Hebrews, neither is a pure Qumranianism, though the latter shows that certain ideas which were formerly regarded as distinctively Greek or Judaeo-Hellenistic are to be found in a Palestinian dissenting group which sought to be notably Hebraic. The means by which these ideas came to be present in this group

⁶⁴ *Cf.* M. Black, *op. cit.*, p. 96ff.

⁶⁵ *Christian Origins and Judaism* (Darton, Longman & Todd, London, 1962), p. 102.

it is not our present purpose to enquire. Certain features make their Qumranian form attractive to the present study.

As with Philo there is a seeking into the meaning underlying the Old Testament Scriptures – an enquiry which leads to a similar disregard of historical situation. With the Qumran literature, however, the application is not only moral, but specifically eschatological. Hebrews has a strong historical sense together with an eschatological and moral emphasis. It is this historical sense that leads to the conclusion that the exegesis of Hebrews is not basically allegorical or eschatological but typological. Yet having acknowledged this, it is still true that, while parallels exist to both the allegorical and the eschatological, it is only the latter which finds its place in the thought-structure of the writer.

The question of the use of *testimonia* in Hebrews and in the Qumran texts must remain an open one. Even if this use and its characteristics be determined in the case of the Qumranites, it is by no means established that this is the method of Hebrews. Indeed, the Qumran practice is of such importance in establishing the possibility of such a hypothesis that it can hardly for that reason be taken as a sure sign of interdependence.

The attitude to Temple, priesthood and sacrifices, is of greater importance as bearing on the very fabric of thought of the Epistle. It does not seem possible here to establish a direct relation, for Hebrews strikes at deeper principles. The *cultus* is not described as inherently wrong, nor is there allusion to its corruption – rather, the *cultus* is imperfect. The spiritual sacrifices of Christians stem from the one perfect sacrifice of Christ, a sacrifice which was not merely some epitome of the sacrificial principle but which actually took place within time and space. However imperfectly, the old sacrificial system pointed towards this sacrifice.

A similar principle seems to be involved with regard to the priesthood of Christ and the heavenly sanctuary, except that the priesthood of Christ does not seem directly related to the Levitical priesthood, and the heavenly sanctuary was foreshadowed by the tabernacle rather than by the Temple. The Qumran scrolls give insight into the complex of Palestinian thought at this point. The presence of such ideas is important, even though it is not clear that they were being accepted, rejected or modified by the author of Hebrews, as might be expected if this background were specifically in mind. There may, indeed, have been some connection between the concept of “tabernacle” and the wilderness community of Qumran, though the latter do not seem to have thought of themselves in these terms.

With the concept of “priesthood”, however, the situation is more complex. There is no evidence so far that the Qumran community thought of there being any other priesthood than that of Aaron. However, they looked forward to two Messiahs – priestly and royal – the priestly being the greater of the two. The writer of Hebrews knows that there is only one Messiah, Jesus, historically of the tribe of Judah. Quite easily, therefore, he is seen as royal Messiah, but the writer wants to emphasise his priesthood. This cannot be Aaronic in origin, and so the theme of Melchizedek is developed. The Qumran emphasis on the Messiah as priest, it should be noted, is a very significant contribution, if only as an element of first-century Palestinian thought.

Perhaps of even more significance, though for the same reason, is the existence within Palestine of an eschatological community with a new emphasis on the Torah, calling its members into a New Covenant with the Lord, engaging in their own peculiar lustrations and communal meal.

However, all of these facets fall short of proof of a direct dependence of Hebrews on a Qumran type of thought except for those who are satisfied by the slenderest evidence. Nevertheless, it is equally clear that these facets enter into the background of thought against which Hebrews has emerged. At this point the nature of the relationships is not clear. What is clear is that the problem of the background of Hebrews cannot be satisfied by any easy solution.

III. Hebrews and Early Christianity

Enquiries into the background of the Epistle to the Hebrews are sometimes in danger of overlooking the fact that, whatever other backgrounds of thought it exhibits, it is basically a Christian production and needs to be regarded as such. Specifically, it is not to be regarded as Philonic or Essene. The presence of both of these modes of thought in New Testament times contributing to the general background of the New Testament period has been reflected in other New Testament writings than Hebrews.

Some consideration has already been given this with reference to the Johannine literature and the Christian Hellenists in relation to Qumran. However, the Christian background itself needs to be examined more carefully with questions such as these in mind – whence comes the fabric of the Epistle’s thought? to what extent were other facets of background paralleled by or incorporated into early Christian thinking? Questions such as these involve a delicate balance of judgment, and for that reason a simple solution need not be expected.

The following preliminary suggestions may, however, be made. It ought to be axiomatic that a Christian writing must be examined in the light of the Christian message. It should, of course, be clear that this message, presented to or from within different cultural backgrounds, may find expression in different terms. Yet one would expect the message itself to be basically the same. Any variations, modifications or developments of this message would be significant, but for the present purpose especially such as stem from the cultural background.

But the cultural background of the first century was quite complex, and it is being increasingly realised that influences cannot be as rigidly separated out as was formerly supposed. It is therefore quite possible to see the evidences of new bodies of material (as currently the Dead Sea Scrolls) built into the background, not only of particular New Testament books, but of New Testament thought as a whole. This is general, but the determination of particular emphases and hence perhaps of particular cultural backgrounds is more complex than this. It is relatively easy to say that many aspects are present, but quite difficult to affirm that here or there one type of thought predominates. Subjective judgments can cloud out the central fact that here is a presentation of the Christian message.

(a) The Primitive Tradition

The author is clearly acquainted with the facts of Jesus’ earthly life. This is evident in those passages which lay emphasis on his humanity (as 2.14-18; 4.15; 5.7-10; 12.1-3; 13.12).¹ The evidence is not detailed enough to assert acquaintance, but at three points the author seems to allude to elements of the Synoptic tradition – the temptation of Christ, the purification of the Temple and the rent veil.²

The references to the “temptations” of Christ in 2.18 and 4.15 are to be applied in a broad sense rather than specifically to the temptations in the desert (Mt. 4.1-11; Mk 1.12-13; Lk. 4.1-13) or, for that matter, to his testing at the hands of the Jewish rulers (Mt. 16.1; 19.3; 22.18, 35; Mk 8.11; 10.2; 12.15; Lk. 11.16). Thus, the testing of 2.18 is specifically the testing of suffering, while 4.15 refers to the trials of human existence in their broadest sense, including the knowledge of all our weaknesses (*ἀσθενείαις*), though he did not because of this experience fall into sin. This may be parallel to the *πειρασμοί* of Lk. 22.28. C. Spicq considers that there may be a particular reference to the sorrowful trial of Gethsemane (Mt. 26.36-46; Mk 14.32-42; Lk. 22.39-46) to which 5.7 clearly refers.³ The further questions of the relation of this to Lukan and Johannine traditions will be considered at a later stage. At this point the fact that the primitive tradition is used is of more significance than the particular manner in which it is used.

With the purification of the Temple, the evidence is not quite so clear. Christ is presented in Hebrews as the one who is faithful as Son over the house (3.6). However, *οἶκος* is surely to be seen here in a general sense, as Spicq notes in his commentary – “in the Biblical sense of household or nation, cf. Ps. 105.21... the

¹ Cf. Wm Manson, *op. cit.*, p. 191 – “the supreme illustration of the close congruence of Hebrews with the Synoptic tradition is, of course, the centrality of place given to the human experience of Jesus in ‘the days of his flesh’.”

² C. Spicq, *L’Épître aux Hébreux*, I, pp. 99-109.

³ *ibid.*, I, p. 99.

true people of God.”⁴ Here there does not seem to be any reference to the sanctuary, earthly or heavenly. While Spicq seems correct in his comment on Christ’s action in cleansing the Temple – “When he enters the Temple, he takes possession of a heritage which is his own. The initiative to purify it is normal on the part of the one who presents himself as Messiah. Far from presenting the appearance of a usurper or an ambitious person, he accomplishes his proper work and acts on his full authority”⁵ – the congruity of this with Heb. 3.6 does not make the latter an allusion to the former. The clearer point of allusion is Christ’s entry into the heavenly sanctuary. Again the entry is in full right as Son. The question is whether, even in the Johannine account (Jn 2.13-32), Jesus in this act is regarded as King-Priest. This seems key to Spicq’s argument – “The historical manifestation of Jesus as King-Priest in the Temple, whether at the beginning of his ministry of salvation, or after his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, may be considered as a type of his entry into the heavenly sanctuary, in the presence of God, on the day after the resurrection.”⁶ Indeed, the type of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary is expressly stated in Hebrews to be Moses’ cleansing of the tabernacle (9.21ff). This takes much of the force out of Spicq’s statement that “the inauguration of the priestly ministry of Christ **in heaven** is like a purification of the sanctuary.”⁷ Now it is true that the Johannine account links the cleansing of the Temple with the saying, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (2.19), a saying referred by the evangelist to Jesus’ death and resurrection (vv. 21, 22), and that the Fourth Gospel understands the earthly ministry of Jesus in terms of the divine *shekhinah*. Indeed, this latter point has been noted earlier, but it seems an over-elaboration of the facts to find in Hebrews clear allusions to the cleansing of the Temple even through the mediation of the Fourth Gospel, though it would be equally incorrect to assert that the writer is clearly ignorant of this incident.

The allusion to the breaking of the veil of the Temple is rather clearer. Apart from the Synoptic references to this event (Mt. 27.51; Mk 15.38; Lk. 23.45), Hebrews is the only New Testament writing to make reference to the *καταπέτασμα* (6.19; 9.3; 10.20). The second of these references alludes directly to the plan of the tabernacle, seeing as the significance of the veil that the way into the Holy Place⁸ has not yet been made evident (9.8). The situation is different for the Christian – the Christian hope is not only founded on the unchangeable purpose of God (6.17-18) but enters within the veil where Jesus has entered on our behalf as forerunner, having become the Melchizedekian High Priest (6.19-20). “Within the veil” (*εἰς τὸ ἐσώτερον τοῦ καταπέτασματος*) is to be thought of here as the very presence of God, but there is no “veil” in the sense of a barrier. Indeed, not only does the Christian’s hope enter within the veil, but this is where the Christian properly belongs. By the blood of Jesus the Christian now has confidence (*παρρησία*) to enter even the holy place, not only because the great High Priest is already there, but because he has inaugurated the new and living way through the veil (10.19-21).

An important exegetical point depends on the understanding of the phrase *τοῦτ’ ἐστὶν τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ*, a point which has considerable bearing on the significance of the veil. It seems grammatically most natural to take this phrase with *διὰ τοῦ καταπέτασματος*, either in apposition or directly as a genitive. In either of these cases there is the closest possible connection, if not actual identification of “the veil” with “his flesh”. Some exegetes who take this view see a direct allusion to the rent veil of the Temple and the flesh of Christ as a barrier which had to be rent before he could enter into the holiest.⁹ G.L. Archer attempts to work this out in more detail, the veil in the old sanctuary representing the *σάρξ* or human nature which forms the barrier between man and God. Christ, however, assumed “flesh” (*cf.* 2.14; 5.7) which he gave up to be torn and pierced by crucifixion thus in his flesh rending the barrier separating believers from their

⁴ *ibid.*, II, p. 66.

⁵ *ibid.*, I. P. 105.

⁶ *ibid.*, I, p. 106.

⁷ *ibid.*, I, p. 107.

⁸ The phrase *πῶν ἀγίω* could conceivably be taken as masculine here – “the way traversed by the saints”, but the neuter follows more closely the usage of the context. *Cf.* J. Héring, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

⁹ M. Dods, *op. cit.*, p. 346, citing with approval A.B. Davidson; T. Hewitt, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Tyndale, London, 1960), p. 161. R.V.G. Tasker, *The Gospel in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Tyndale, London, 1950), pp. 30-31, sees this to be the significance “if ‘the flesh’ is identified with ‘the veil’.” However, he thinks that the phrase “may be interpreted not in close connection with the veil, but as descriptive of the manner in which Jesus opened up a way through the veil.”

God.¹⁰ However, this interpretation adds too much to the thought of Hebrews. There is no reason why the barrier should be particularly designated “flesh”. This seems almost an allegorisation of Hebrews!

R.C.H. Lenski attaches the phrase to “the veil”, but invests the latter with quite a different meaning. While the veil was a barrier for the body of worshippers, it was nevertheless the only means of entrance to the inner sanctuary – used as such only by the high priest once a year. “The crucified Christ is the entrance, the entrance veil”.¹¹ In this sense both “veil” and “flesh” are seen in closest connection with the “new and living way”, though more emphasis needs to be given here to the **living** Christ as constituting the living way inaugurated in his flesh. Lenski does not think the writer makes any use of the rent veil, never in fact going beyond the original tabernacle.¹²

Spicq’s view expressed in his introductory volume seems similar to that of Lenski. The veil was the symbol of the inaccessibility of Yahweh. Jesus, by his sacrifice, has entered into the true sanctuary, into the presence of God, and has been established there permanently to exercise his priestly ministry on behalf of sinners. Thus, humanity is redeemed, and the relations and intimacy between humanity and God rendered impossible by sin have been established. Spicq considers that this is specifically expressed by the metaphor of the rent veil, but he continues, “The latter is therefore removed, or better it becomes in the Christian cult the symbol of an opening, an entrance, and consequently is applied to the very person of Christ who, by his death, has removed this barrier”.¹³ In his commentary, Spicq seems not only to disagree with Lenski (and Windisch) on the matter of allusion to the rent veil but also on the connections of the phrase under consideration. He links the phrase, not with “the veil”, but with *ὁδόν*, and regards the two genitives (*τοῦ καταπέτασμος* and *τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ*) as constituting a brachylogy, the former to be taken spatially, the latter instrumentally, both being dependent on the preposition *διὰ*. Although he does not here identify Christ (or his flesh) with the veil, the “living way” is nonetheless the incarnate Son who by his sacrifice leads us into the heavenly sanctuary since his ascension.¹⁴

Spicq is not the first who has sought to avoid seeing Christ’s flesh as in any way a barrier by linking the phrase with “way”. B.F. Westcott seeks a solution in the same direction, though as a genitive in direct dependence on the latter – “a way through the veil, that is a way consisting in his flesh, his true nature” (*cf.* NEB, “the way of his flesh”).¹⁵ J. Héring arrives at a similar conclusion, insisting that either a dative or the repetition of the preposition *διὰ* would be necessary for Spicq’s construction. However, the point is mainly grammatical, for he understands this genitive, not as indicating Christ’s flesh as the way (which, incidentally, as it stands leaves the question of how it is seen as a “living way”), but as indicating the way “which has been opened and traversed by his person”. There is, perhaps, an allusion to the rent veil.¹⁶

It is not the purpose here to solve this exegetical problem, though its relevance to the issue under consideration is quite clear in this passage in which the possibility of allusion of the rending of the Temple veil is most distinct. The “allegorising” interpretation implies a **direct** allusion, but this is far-fetched and such clarity of allusion is not present in the text. If the phrase is taken with “way”, it is a reasonable possibility that there is an **indirect** allusion to the event as an element in the passion narrative. Certainly, there is congruity in this possibility. In the identification of Christ’s flesh with the veil in the sense of a means of entry, however, the situation is not so clear. In this case, the old veil is completely done away with, rather than rent apart – a thought which would correspond to the attitude of the Epistle to other institutions of the Old Testament *cultus*. If the rending is in mind, it is necessary to see it, not as the symbol of the breaking down of the barrier between man and God, but as the abrogation of the old institution. Yet the writer needs no supporting historical evidence to make such an assertion, just as he needs no allusion to the destruction of the Temple. In viewing all the evidence, however, the writer lays considerable emphasis on the openness of the way into the most holy place and there seems at least quite a reasonable possibility that the writer may be indirectly alluding to the early tradition of the rent veil, reported by all three Synoptists without comment or theological elaboration.

¹⁰ *op. cit.*, p. 63.

¹¹ *op. cit.*, pp. 345-346. *Cf.* F.C. Grant, *op. cit.*, p. 49 – “Jesus’ flesh is now the ‘curtain’.”

¹² *op. cit.*, p. 347.

¹³ *L’Épître aux Hébreux*, I, p. 108.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, II, p. 316.

¹⁵ *op. cit.*, p. 322.

¹⁶ *op. cit.*, pp. 97-98.

Another point of specific allusion to the life of Jesus is to be found in 13.12 – “Jesus... suffered outside the gate.” The Synoptics make no special point about the situation of Golgotha, the site of the crucifixion. The Fourth Gospel mentions that it was “near the city” (19.20), but this is given no theological significance. It is merely the statement of a fact for the benefit of those who may not have been familiar with it. The writer of Hebrews takes this fact and uses it to address the strongest challenge of the Epistle. To be “outside the camp” was to be unclean and an outcast of the people. Jesus did not die in a nomadic setting – rather, he suffered “outside the gate,” but this bears the same reproach and the writer easily reverts to the same figure. As H. Koester has noted, the terms “gate” and “suffer” point to the historical fact of the Christian revelation.¹⁷

A further aspect for consideration with respect to the primitive tradition is the relation between Hebrews and the apostolic *kerygma*. To others must be left the questions relating to the contents and form of this *kerygma*.¹⁸ The question before us here is whether Hebrews clearly exhibits the main features (as far as these can be deduced) of the early *kerygma*. A good-starting point is to analyse the thought of the Epistle in terms of C.H. Dodd’s summary.¹⁹ With a rephrasing of Dodd’s terms, the following elements are clearly present. The prophecies have been fulfilled in God’s revelation in his Son (1.1,2) – indeed, the whole system of sanctuary, priesthood and sacrifice is fulfilled in him (5.1-10 etc.); he is the Davidic Messiah (7.14); he came to do God’s will (10.7), declaring the message of salvation (2.3); he suffered (5.8; 13.12) death on the Cross (12.2) in order to deliver those in bondage to the devil (2.14,15) and to bear the sins of many (9.28); God raised him from the dead (13.20); he is now at God’s right hand (1.3,13; 8.1; 10.12; 12.2); he is to appear a second time in connection with salvation and judgment (9.27-28; 10.25ff, 37-39); hence the call to faith (10.19ff).²⁰

When this is compared with the outlines of the apostolic *kerygma* derived by Dodd from the Pauline epistles and the early speeches of Acts, it is clear that all the principal elements are present. Two elements, however, are absent from this summary – the Holy Spirit and the New Age. It is true that the main function of the Holy Spirit in the Epistle is revelation (3.7; 9.8; 10.15) and that there is practically no elaboration of the role of the Spirit in the life of the believer. However, the theme is not absent – “distributions of the Holy Spirit” were the divine witnesses confirming the spoken word (2.4); believers had been made “partakers of the Holy Spirit” (6.4), and thus it was very grave if they should insult “the Spirit of grace” (10.29). The eschatology of the Epistle will be receiving its own due consideration.

With reference to the New Age, however, it should be noted that Dodd may have overemphasised this concept. R.H. Mounce has rightly insisted that there was no **explicit** testimony to the arrival of the New Age in the early preaching, but rather “a polemic presentation of the crucial facts concerning Jesus of Nazareth.”²¹ Two references might be cited, nonetheless, to indicate the congruity of Hebrews at this point with this element of early thought – the coming of Christ was at “the consummation of the ages” (9.26; cf. 1.2) and Christians are experiencing already “the powers of the coming age” (6.5).

What is of greatest importance here, however, is not that references can be found to these elements of the primitive *kerygma*, but that these elements are not **incidental** to the writer’s thought. They may not always be the themes given the most detailed exposition, but they always form the background to and undergird those themes. Thus, to cite one example, while the heavenly priesthood of Christ is a development of thought not clearly present in the earliest traditions of primitive preaching, it can be shown to depend essentially on the elements noted above – the element of fulfilment is important in the writer’s typology with respect to the ministry of Christ; while Jesus is notably High Priest, he is the royal Melchizedekian priest; the experiences of his earthly ministry prepared him for his particular priestly ministry in heaven; his death constitutes the priestly offering he makes; his resurrection and exaltation represent his entry into the heavenly sanctuary and commencement of his priestly work. His second appearing, of course, being still a

¹⁷ *HTR*, LV, 4, p. 301.

¹⁸ C.H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments* (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1936); H.J. Cadbury, “Acts and Eschatology” in W.D. Davies and D. Daube (eds), *op. cit.*, pp. 317ff; T.F. Glasson, “The Kerygma: Is Our Version Correct?” in *HJ*, LI (Jan. 1953), pp. 129-132; C.F. Evans, “The Kerygma” in *JTS*, VII (Apr. 1956), pp. 25-41; R.H. Mounce, *The Essential Nature of New Testament Preaching* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1960), pp. 60-128.

¹⁹ *The Apostolic Preaching*, pp. 17, 21-24.

²⁰ Cf. A.M. Hunter, *Introducing New Testament Theology* (S.C.M., London, 1957), pp. 119-120.

²¹ *op. cit.*, pp. 85-87.

matter of Christian hope cannot be the basis of this priesthood as can the accomplished aspects of the proclamation – yet it points in some sense to the consummation of this priestly ministry.

There is some disagreement among scholars concerning the eschatology of the Epistle. Thus, J. Héring acknowledges the essential place of eschatology to the Christian Gospel – “If the opposition between the two aeons plays a relatively unobtrusive role in the Old Testament, so that one could without difficulty remain a Jewish theologian while denying it, the situation is different on the terrain of the Gospel, where it is presupposed even when it is not expressly developed.”²² Nevertheless he considers that the eschatology of Hebrews has been so profoundly modified by Platonic idealism that essential Christian concepts such as the resurrection and the new creation find practically no place in it. By the author’s nomadic view of the Christian life pressing on to the goal fixed by the divine promises, the Judaeo-Christian “linear” view of time (as against the Greek “cyclic” view) has been reclaimed – “But on the other hand, he ignores all of the doctrine of a new creation, which elsewhere in Christianity is the normal outcome of the development of ‘the times’.”²³ However, it has been noted earlier that the treatment in Hebrews of the shadow and the real is more in line with eschatological than with Platonic thought. The thought of Hebrews cannot rightly be fitted into a Platonic cosmology of two superimposed and coexistent worlds²⁴ – indeed, 11.3, which is cited in support bears the distinctly un-Platonic doctrine of creation.

It is striking to note by way of contrast C.K. Barrett’s conclusion that Hebrews “stands in close contact with the primitive theology” and that “the common pattern of N.T. eschatology is in Hebrews made uncommonly clear.”²⁵ Barrett disagrees with Moffatt who seems to regard the writer’s eschatology as an incompatible addition to the ideas of the high-priesthood and the two worlds.²⁶ It may be agreed with Barrett that “the thought of Hebrews is consistent,” but his affirmation that “in it the eschatological is the determining element”²⁷ is a little too emphatic. There is obviously a broader basis than simply eschatology, though Barrett may here be conceiving of eschatology as including the whole primitive *kerygma*. Thus while Philo approaches the Old Testament from presuppositions of Greek philosophy and the epistle of Barnabas from the Midrashic tradition, the only presupposition of Hebrews is “primitive Christian eschatology”.²⁸ The essential features of this eschatology can be clearly perceived. As Barrett has it, “God has begun to fulfil his ancient promises; the dawn of the new age has broken, though the full day has not yet come. The Church lives in the last days, but before the last day.”²⁹ Reference confirming this pattern have been noted above, showing that the coming of Christ was seen to have eschatological significance (1.2; 9.26) and that Christians are already experiencing the powers of the new age, though this, however, was still “coming” (6.5).

This theme, however, demands further consideration here. The resurrection from the dead and the eternal judgment are elementary Christian truths (6.2).³⁰ This is why the decisions of the present are so important (3.13). That judgment follows death is still a valid principle, except that salvation for those who eagerly wait for him is the consequence following Christ’s death to bear the sins of many – the fullness of this completed salvation³¹ will be seen at his second appearing (9.27-28). However, just as the prophet had to warn the people against presuming on the salvation in “the day of the Lord” (Am. 5.18-20), so in this epistle “the day drawing near” is to be the matter of earnest exhortation (10.25), since especially for those who continue to sin after receiving the knowledge of the truth there remains only a “terrifying expectation of judgment (10.26-27 and ff). Indeed, the *parousia* may involve either destruction or preservation depending

²² “Eschatologie biblique et Idéalisme platonicien” in W.D. Davies and D. Daube (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 450.

²³ *ibid.*, p. 453.

²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 450.

²⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 390, 391.

²⁶ *op. cit.*, p. liv.

²⁷ W.D. Davies and D. Daube (eds.), *op. cit.*, p.366.

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 373.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 391.

³⁰ This verse has made differing impressions. Thus, C.K. Barrett, in *ibid.*, pp. 363-364 – “The theme of judgment belongs to elementary but essential Christian doctrine”; but J. Héring, *ibid.*, p. 451 – “As for the resurrection of the dead in general or that of Christians in particular, the author only mentions it in passing among the elementary teachings that the recipients of the epistle ought to have gone beyond long since.”

³¹ The completeness of this one saving act is emphasised here, not only by ἀπαξ, but also by the phrase χωρίς ἁμαρτίας which seems best interpreted here as “not to deal with sin”. So most commentators.

on whether one has faith (10.35-39). Already in the establishment of the new covenant the old is seen to be obsolete and ready to disappear (8.13) and the time of reformation to be approaching (9.10). There yet remains to happen the final catastrophe in which the whole created order will be removed. Thus will remain the unshakeable kingdom (12.27-28) and our goal of the coming lasting city will be realised (13.14). However, in some measure it is true that we have already come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem (12.22). At whatever stage the development of eschatological events is considered, Jesus Christ is the key to the whole process (13.8). Thus, it is the one in whom God has spoken to us in these last days and who is now seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high (1.1-4) to whom it is implied the world to come will be subjected (2.5-10).

The affinity of this type of thought with primitive eschatology is clear, as also is the substantial place it occupies in the Epistle. The relation of this to the rest of the writer's thought confirms the impression of the consistency of the whole. Héring's notion that Hebrews has a Platonic cosmology of two superimposed and coexistent worlds (as noted above) does not take sufficient account of the chronological and hence eschatological note in the comparisons made. This is why there is real point in calling them typology rather than allegory. The real existence of the "copies and shadows" is nowhere denied. These, however, were forward-pointing – that is why they became obsolete and near disappearing when the new covenant was established (8.5,13). No longer could they really serve as copies and shadows. Moreover, the perfect sacrifice itself was historical (a distinctly un-Platonic element which is key to the writer's teaching on the Priesthood of Christ and on the heavenly sanctuary). This chronological progression indicates that the writer's concept of the shadow and the real is quite eschatological, though his eschatology, like that elsewhere in the early Church, involved an overlapping of the two ages. Only thus could shadow and substance be seen contemporaneously.

C.K. Barrett considers that the author's use of philosophical and liturgical language is his most significant contribution to the problem of New Testament eschatology. "By means of this terminology it is possible to impress upon believers the nearness of the invisible world without insisting upon the nearness of the *parousia*."³² This seems to be a change of emphasis from the statement at the beginning of his essay. Indeed, it seems better to say that the writer saw clearly that the two ages are not cataclysmically separated, but that in the Christian era the two must coexist for a time while the old is disappearing and the new being made manifest. There are, nonetheless, decisive eschatological events – the ministry, death and ascension of Jesus, which inaugurate the new age, and his second appearing which will consummate the work of salvation.

At a number of points, then, the Epistle is seen to bear a close relation to the primitive tradition.³³ The writer is acquainted with the facts of Jesus' earthly life, though not necessarily from our present Gospels. All elements of the apostolic *kerygma* are present and integral to his thought. His eschatology bears strong resemblances to that of the early Church. Of course, in none of this is it implied that the writer did not develop this material and make his own important contributions or that there may not be other traceable influences. However, the Epistle is not to be seen as an oddity divorced from the primitive tradition but as a writing clearly related to it.

(b) Paulinism

Although the evidence seems decisively against the Pauline authorship of the Epistle, the problem of its relation to Pauline doctrine remains. While substantial reasons can be found for denying the Pauline **authorship** of the Epistle, the argument can be extended too far so as to imply that the Epistle had **no points of contact** with the formative theological genius of the great Apostle Paul.

C. Spicq has given some attention to the divergences of the Epistle from Pauline thought.³⁴ Some of these, in particular, seem quite decisive. Thus there is no claim here to have received the gospel direct from Christ (*cf.* 2.3; 13.7; but compare the categorical claim of Gal. 1.12; Eph. 3.2-4). This Epistle usually

³² W.D. Davies and D. Daube (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 391.

³³ Cf. the analysis in V. Taylor, *The Atonement in New Testament Teaching* (Epworth, London, 2ed 1945), pp. 102-111.

³⁴ *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, I, pp. 145-155.

moves directly from Christ's death to his ascension and session at God's right hand (1.3; 4.14; etc.), referring to the resurrection only once (13.20; *cf.* 5.7), whereas Paul emphasised in all his epistles the fact and importance of the resurrection (as, for example in 1 Cor. 15.3-8 and ff). For Paul, Christ is notably in the believing soul, the phrase *ἐν Χριστῷ* (attested 164 times in Paul's epistles, including Philemon) being the key to this concept of union with Christ, while Hebrews makes no reference at all to *ἐν Χριστῷ*, but sees Christ notably in heaven where one must go to appear before God (as in 1.6,9; 10.19ff).

Furthermore, there are certain notable differences in theological emphasis. It is surely an overemphasis to affirm with Spicq that the writer sets "faith in God" among the primary elements of Christianity which the perfect ought to have gone beyond (6.11).³⁵ Primary indeed it is, but also foundational (note *θεμέλιον*), and is, in fact, given a very important place in the Epistle from this point (besides the very significant chapter 11, note 6.12; 10.22,38,39; 12.2; 13.7). It is true that in Paul "faith" is especially related to "justification" and to establishing the believer in vital union with Christ. In Hebrews, "faith" is not especially related to justification, being rather the characteristic attitude of the Christian life, "an orientation of our whole life which gives it a new direction and which alone can secure, if not such miracles as those accorded to the ancients, at least a sure entry into the promised land."³⁶ No opposition between faith and works is specified here. In 11.3, "faith" seems to refer to an intellectual assent, but more usually it is a life of active acceptance of the divine promises. The tension between faith and works evident in Paul and James does not seem to be present at all here. It should be noted, however, by special reference to chapter 11 that the people of old received divine approval by faith (v. 2); Abel is likewise said to have received approval as righteous by it (v. 4); faith is the indispensable condition for pleasing God (v. 6); faith is seen to rest on the promise and work of God (v. 10 *etc.*); and in 12.2 the faith of a Christian is shown to rest on the work of Jesus. While this is not a statement of the Pauline doctrine of "justification by grace through faith", it is not incompatible with it.

Spicq's conclusions on the use of *δίκαιος* and its cognates³⁷ need careful consideration, as his judgments do not always seem accurate. Thus, it is true that Hebrews ignores *δικαιώω* (but apart from its use in Romans and Galatians it is not common in the Pauline epistles), *δικαίωσις* (though this is only used in Rom. 4.25; 5.18), *δικαίως* (though this only occurs three times in the Pauline epistles if the Pastorals are included), *δίκαιος* as directly attributed to God (but the only reference apart from 2 Tim. 4.8 is Rom. 3.26) and *τὸ δίκαιον* "just thing" (to which the clear reference is Col. 4.1, but *cf.* also Eph. 6.1; Phil. 1.7; 2 Thess. 1.6). It is true that *δικαίωμα* is used in the Epistle in the sense of rule or regulation (in the same context, 9.1,10), but Paul, who uses this word only in Romans, gives it a wide range of meaning – sometimes nearer to the use of Hebrews as "just standard or requirement" (as 1.32; 2.26; 8.4), once as a "just sentence" (here of acquittal, 5.16), and once as "righteous act" (5.18). However, it is quite begging the question to assert that *δίκαιος* (as also *δικαιοσύνη*) is used in the Old Testament sense, as there are variations in the use of the corresponding Hebrew words in the Old Testament, as indeed in the use of *δίκαιος* in the New. The principal equivalent *רָצוֹן* has the meaning of "guiltless, without fault". In Paul, the concept speaks not only of a divine verdict on a person, but of the divine saving activity (Rom. 5.19). Hence, God's righteousness is notably his saving activity (Rom. 1.17) and so is the sole ground and source of his people's righteousness on the basis of faith (Rom. 3.21ff; 4.3ff; 10.3; 1 Cor. 1.30; 2 Cor. 5.21; Phil. 3.9).

Now, in Heb. 11.4, *δίκαιος* as predicated of Abel is more than moral rectitude of which the cardinal expression is faith. Faith in this chapter is always seen as directed towards God and the divine promises, which are future because not realised until the coming of Jesus (*cf.* vv. 39-40). However, faith before this decisive event must for that reason embody more of the element of hope than faith in the days of fulfilment, but is still an active quality based on the divine goodness resulting in divine approval (note 11.39-40³⁸). To note the difference of emphasis in quotation of Hab. 2.4, as Spicq does – "faith, the source of justice, faith, the source of life"³⁹ – is to miss the similarity of meaning thus expressed by different minds, a similarity which suggests that the writer at least had contact with the Pauline group.

³⁵ *ibid.*, I, p. 148.

³⁶ J. Héring, *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, p. 103.

³⁷ *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, I, p. 149.

³⁸ *μαρτυρηθέντες* (v. 39) "having had witness borne (about them)", here implies clearly a **good** testimony (*cf.* Acts 6.3) and seems to refer to the divine testimony (as 11.4).

³⁹ *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, I, p. 149.

A further difference in emphasis is seen in the attitude taken towards the Mosaic economy. For Paul, the basis of this economy appears to be the Law, for Hebrews the priesthood and *cultus*. Paul saw the Law as inherently weak (Rom. 8.3) and consequently insisted that in no sense could it be the basis of justification (Rom. 3.20; Gal. 2.16; *cf.* Acts 13.39). The just requirement (*τὸ δικάϊωμα*) of the Law could not be fulfilled on the basis of the Law, but only in the divine activity in sending God's Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as a sin offering⁴⁰ (Rom. 8.3-4).

Hebrews, in viewing priesthood and *cultus*, allows some efficacy to the old system, even though but an imperfect shadow. Thus, “the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling defiled persons sanctify for the purity of the flesh” (9.13) – they restored ceremonial purity to those who were ceremonially defiled. However, though such sacrifices be offered continually, they can never cleanse the conscience (10.1-2; *cf.* 9.14). At this point, one notes a resemblance to Paul's thought, for just as with the latter justification was impossible through the works of the Law, so here the ultimate conclusion is that “it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” (10.4). The efficacy of the old sacrifices was minor indeed, though they did genuinely foreshadow the perfect sacrifice.

The Law did not prepare for the work of Christ in this way, though in other respects its function is like that of the sacrifices. The Law prepared the way as a *παιδαγωγός εἰς Χριστόν* (whether *εἰς Χριστόν* is to be taken temporally or as a spatial metaphor – Gal. 3.23-24). In this same context the Law is described as being added “for the sake of transgressions” (*τῶν παραβάσεων χάριν*, v. 19) – whether to act as a restraining influence on them or to stimulate sin (Rom. 7.7ff) so that it should be seen as “sinful beyond measure” (Rom. 7.13). Thus, the Law cannot be the basis of justification, for it is notably through the Law that the knowledge of sin (*ἐπίγνωσις ἁμαρτίας*) comes (Rom. 3.20).

In Hebrews, the ultimate inefficacy of the Law (the sacrificial code) to take away sins points to a positive function, for in the sacrifices there is a continual reminder of sins (*ἀνάμνησις ἁμαρτίων* – 10.3). There is a parallel at this point, though it must be noted that in Hebrews this “reminder of sins” is part of the imperfection of the Law rather than an element in its preparation for the coming and work of Christ. The concept of progression is different.

This leads to some consideration of this different thought-pattern. Spicq has described the Pauline pattern at this point a “multiform antithesis” with the opposition of Law-Gospel, letter-spirit, sin-grace, slavery-liberty, works-faith, while the Epistle to the Hebrews has a “metathesis”, the contrast between type-antitype, shadow-reality being of kind rather than of degree.⁴¹ This difference is seen in the parallel phrases noted at the end of the previous paragraph. In some contexts, Law and grace in Paul seem to be successively involved in the process of salvation. In Hebrews, however, the Law is not involved in the **process** of salvation as such, but instead sets out imperfectly yet truly the means of salvation later to be manifested in the ministry of Christ.

While attention is rightly focused on such divergences from Pauline emphasis, it is plainly a distortion of the facts not to see also the resemblances to Pauline teaching. Thus, there seems to be a similar doctrine of Christ, his previous glory and part in creation. In Heb. 1.2,3, he is described as “heir of all things (*κληρονόμον πάντων*), through whom (*δι' οὗ*) also he made the world” and as “the radiance (*ἀπαύγασμα*) of his glory and the exact representation (*χαρακτήρ*) of his nature, upholding all things by the word of his power.” Having completed the task of purification of sins, “he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high.” “Heir” (*κληρονόμον*) and “firstborn” (*πρωτότοκον* – v. 6) probably have similar force here and both seem to refer to a pre-existent state of the Son – the former in a setting where the eternal order is clearly set forth, while the latter does not refer to the *πρωτότοκος* as the one then created but one who is before all things. The picture is not merely one of pre-eminence in time, but rather in glory (note v. 6; 2.9), name (1.4) and essence (1.3).

⁴⁰ *περί ἁμαρτίας* is the usual LXX rendering for $\pi\alpha\rho\iota\sigma\tau\eta\rho\iota\sigma\iota\varsigma$ in the sense of “sin-offering”. Whether it should be so taken here (as NEB) or as “to deal with sin” (as RSV) is a debatable point (*cf.* C.F.D. Moule, *An Idiom-Book of New Testament Greek* (C.U.P., Cambridge, 2ed 1959), p. 63). The “cultic” interpretation of the death of Christ is not absent from Romans (note 3.25), but little significance is to be attached to the use of the same phrase in Hebrews as this is only used clearly in this sense in quotation (10.6,8; but *cf.* 5.3).

⁴¹ *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, I, p. 150.

To some extent this language seems related to that of the captivity epistles.⁴² Thus, Eph. 1.20 presents God as seating Christ “at his right hand in heavenly places,” superior to every name (v. 21), with all things put in subjection under him (v. 22; cf. Heb. 1.13; 2.8ff). In Col. 1.15ff, he is presented as the “image (εἰκών – a word that is not as strong as *χαρακτήρ*, but is of parallel significance) of the invisible God, the firstborn (πρωτότοκος) of all creation.” The idea of the “new Adam” seems to be in mind here, though he is not thereby thought of as a part of the creation, but rather as the one in whom the creation finds its meaning and existence. Thus, all things were created “in him” (ἐν αὐτῷ), “through him” (δι’ αὐτοῦ) and “for him” (εἰς αὐτόν), and all hold together or cohere in him. This bears some resemblance to the teaching of Hebrews.

Phil. 2.6-11 also contains parallels to the thought of Hebrews. This passage may have wider significance than Pauline associations, if in fact it represents an early confessional statement. However, this is not the place to investigate this question nor in any detailed way the weighty exegetical problems of the passage.⁴³ Significantly, the passage moves directly from the passion to the exaltation of Christ – a feature already noted in Hebrews. “The form (μορφή) of God,” whatever precise meaning is to be given it here, has a force parallel to that of εἰκών. While at this point the doctrine is most precisely developed in Hebrews, its heritage in earlier forms is plain. The theme of the self-humbling of Christ and of his obedience in the days of his flesh is also set out in Hebrews (as notably in 2.14-17; 3.2; 5.8; 10.7,9). These various aspects are quite integral to the thought of Hebrews.

Further parallels with the Pauline epistles may be noted: a similar view of the new covenant (Heb. 8.6; 2 Cor. 3.9ff); a similar view of Abraham’s faith as an example (Heb. 11.11,12,17-19; Rom. 3.17-20); a similar view of the distribution of gifts by the Holy Spirit (Heb. 2.4; 1 Cor. 12.11); an appeal to the same Old Testament passages (as Ps. 8 in Heb. 2.6-9 and 1 Cor. 15.27; Dt. 32.35 in Heb. 10.30 and Rom. 12.19; Hab. 2.4 in Heb. 10.38, Rom. 1.17 and Gal. 3.11); a similar use of the athletic metaphor of the Christian life (Heb. 12.1; 1 Cor. 11.24). The weight of these parallels could only be established after considerable further study, and it cannot be stated on the present analysis that they prove dependence. They are, however, congruous with the general conclusion to which the evidence seems to lead, viz. that the writer to the Hebrews, while clearly showing himself independent of Paul, is nevertheless in line with, and probably has contacts with, Paulinism.

(c) Lucan Writings

As early as Clement of Alexandria, some connection has been seen between the Epistle and Luke. Eusebius of Caesarea has preserved Clement’s opinion on the matter (*H.E.*, VI, xiv), viz. that Paul wrote the Epistle in Hebrew, but Luke translated it for the Greeks and hence “the same complexion of style is found in the Epistle and in the Acts.”

B.F. Westcott has commented on this likeness to the style of the Lucan writings as “unquestionably remarkable.”⁴⁴ More recently special study has been given to this issue by C.P.M. Jones in an essay entitled “The Epistle to the Hebrews and the Lucan Writings”⁴⁵ in which he seeks to establish that there is “a kinship of outlook, a common family likeness” between these writings.⁴⁶ The purpose here is not to solve questions relating to authorship, but to establish the elements which form the background of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

To compare the **styles** of two sets of writings is a highly technical and complex task. It is in order, however, to make the general comment that, while Luke-Acts do not achieve the rhetorical polish of Hebrews, the style of these writings is nonetheless quite literary, even though it seems to have been deliberately varied in accordance with sources and circumstances. The comment of C.F.D. Moule is

⁴² Cf. C. Spicq’s analysis in *ibid.*, I, p. 161ff. The questions of date and authenticity of these epistles cannot be considered here.

⁴³ A useful study of these problems which sets out and considers the main views is to be found in R.P. Martin, *An Early Christian Confession. Philippians iii.5-11 in Recent Interpretation* (Tyndale, London, 1960).

⁴⁴ *op. cit.*, p. lxxvi. cf. p. xlvi.

⁴⁵ D.E. Nineham (ed.), *Studies in the Gospels. Essays in memory of R.H. Lightfoot* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1955), pp. 113-143.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p. 142.

pertinent, “At any rate St Luke is less uniformly elegant than the anonymous writer to the Hebrews, who has a considerable sense of the rhetorical and the poetic, and a style which has glitter if not warmth.”⁴⁷ It appears, then, that it may be too superficial a judgment to see a relationship on style alone, except as this may indicate some degree of literary training.⁴⁸

B.F. Westcott has listed nineteen words and phrases exemplifying “the frequent use” by Hebrews “of words characteristic of St Luke among the writers of the N.T.”⁴⁹ As C.P.M. Jones has noted, two of these can hardly be justified in the list, but Jones goes on to add a further thirty-five words which occur only in Luke-Acts and Hebrews.⁵⁰ The significance of these lists is difficult to assess. Indeed, it is difficult to justify Westcott’s description of “the frequent use of words characteristic of St Luke” (emphasis mine) on the basis of words used once or twice by Hebrews which occur once or twice in Luke-Acts. A similar comment needs to be tendered concerning Jones’ additional list of words “only rarely found outside these writings.” A number of these, while used on several occasions in Luke-Acts, are as rare in Hebrews as in the rest of the New Testament (as *ὀρίζω*, only Heb. 4.7; *περιαιρέω*, only Heb. 10.11; *περιέρχομαι*, only Heb. 11.37; *στάσις*, only Heb. 9.8; *τεχνίτης*, only Heb. 11.10; *ὑποστέλλω*, only Heb. 10.38). In the case of *σκληρύνω*, Hebrews quotes or alludes to Ps. 95.8 on several occasions while in the Lucan writings it is only found in Acts 19.9.

It may well be thought that such words do not form a strong basis for comparison, as Jones seems to acknowledge. In several instances, however, even where the number of occurrences seems rather small, the comparison seems to be significant. Thus Jesus is described as *ἀρχηγός* in Peter’s speeches in Acts 3.15 and 5.31 and also in Heb. 2.10 and 12.2.

In Hebrews the word tends to have particular force derived from the emphasis of Hebrews on Christians as the pilgrim people. Thus Jesus leads (*ἀγαγόντα*) many sons to glory (2.10), while he is the one on whom the faithful must fix their gaze as they press on in the race of faith (12.2). Quite probably a connection is to be seen with the *πρόδρομος* of 6.20.

In the Acts references, even though the force of the word may be different, it is significantly set in relation with “life” and “salvation”. Indeed F.F. Bruce has noted on *τὸν ἀρχηγὸν τῆς ζωῆς* in 3.15, “in Aram. this would be the same as *τὸν ἀρχηγὸν τῆς σωτηρίας* in Heb. ii.10, as Aram. *ḥayyē* is the equivalent of both *ζωή* and *σωτηρία* ... Here and in Heb. ii.10 it denotes Christ as the *Source* of life and salvation; in v.31 the meaning ‘Prince’ or ‘Leader’ is uppermost; in Heb. xii.2, the meaning ‘Leader’, ‘Exemplar’.”⁵¹ The usage of the two writings, therefore, while showing evident variation in the meaning of this word, is not so divergent as to exclude some degree of common background.

The expression *ἀναστάσεως τυγχάνειν* is found in Lk. 20.35 and Heb. 11.35. The expression itself is as striking as it is unique, though some parallel may be seen in the use of *καταντάω* in Acts 26.7 and Phil. 3.11. The use of *τυγχάνω* with the genitive in this sense of “attain, obtain” is especially common to Luke-Acts and Hebrews in the New Testament, being also found in Acts 24.2; 26.22; 27.3; and Heb. 8.6. Apart from these it is found only in 2 Tim. 2.10. Thus, while the expression may serve to indicate general kinship along with other evidence, it hardly points to a specific relationship.

The use of *εὐλαβής* and its derivatives solely by Luke-Acts and Hebrews seems on the surface to have some significance. Here again, care needs to be exercised. Hebrews has only *εὐλάβεια* (5.7; 12.28) and *εὐλαβέομαι* (11.7, while Luke-Acts has only *εὐλαβής* (Lk. 2.25; Acts 2.5; 8.2; 22.12). Now, *εὐλάβεια* in Hebrews is notably a Christian quality, being exemplified in Jesus himself in the days of his flesh (5.7), and exhorted as part of acceptable Christian worship (12.28). The use of *εὐλαβής* in Luke-Acts points rather to an Old Testament background. Thus, it fittingly describes Simeon (Lk. 2.25) and the people gathered in Jerusalem at the time of Pentecost (Acts 2.5). In all probability, its use in Acts 8.2 indicates that the men who buried Stephen were Jews, even if they were also Christians, while in 22.12 the description of Ananias as *ἐλαβῆς κατὰ τὸν νόμον* clearly designates him as a pious Jew in terms calculated to appeal to pious Jews. The verb *εὐλαβέομαι* is used only in Heb. 11.7 with reference to Noah. This word, however, had taken on a rather more general meaning, pointing here to the heeding of the divine command. It is not

⁴⁷ *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁴⁸ F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *op. cit.*, § 3.

⁴⁹ *op. cit.* p. lxxviii.

⁵⁰ D.E. Nineham (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 117.

⁵¹ *The Acts of the Apostles. The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (Tyndale, London, 1951), p. 109.

suggested here that these New and Old Testament concepts are unrelated, but that they involve a slight shift in emphasis. The new emphasis is seen in the teaching of Hebrews in the word *παρρησία* which is to be an integral part of the Christian approach to God (3.6; 4.16; 10.19,35). Thus, there may not be any strong significance in the usage of this word-group by Luke-Acts and Hebrews.

The items considered by Jones as indicating similarity of fact or interest (mainly in minor details) have varying weight. The emphasis on Jesus as Messiah of Judaic rather than of Levitical origin⁵² in Hebrews is probably seen better in such terms as noted earlier, *viz.* the superiority of his priesthood and the concept of the priest-king as exemplified in terms of Melchizedek. It is not the question of whether the Messiah is Judaic or Levitical, but rather the statement that he exercises both kingly and priestly function which are superior to what has gone before. The argument of Hebrews would be self-defeating if it were trying to prove the superiority of Judah to Levi in terms of Abraham's meeting with Melchizedek, for, it might easily be pressed, Judah was just as much in the loins of his father at that time. Jones asserts that Luke places emphasis on the Judaic and Davidic descent of our Lord in his opening chapters, but the references given (1.27,32,69; 2.4,11) emphasise his Davidic lineage (though hardly more than does Matthew's account – 1.1,20; 2.2,6) but do not expand on his clearly-inferred Judaic descent. Further, there is no indication in the narrative of 1.41 that Levi is hereby bowing to Judah. It rather portrays the forerunner's acknowledgment of the one he would herald (*cf.* 3.16ff).

Concerning the trial and suffering of Christ,⁵³ something has already been said in relation to the primitive tradition. C. Spicq has asserted on this point that "it is particularly with Luke's account that Hebrews has the most affinities."⁵⁴ He adduces a number of points in support of this assertion. Thus, this evangelist more than the others emphasises the humanity and distress of Jesus during this testing in Gethsemane. A careful balance of judgment needs to be maintained on this point. While the narrative of Luke overlaps that which is common to Matthew and Mark, proper account needs to be taken of the independent material. In the latter two Gospels, express mention is made of his grief and distress (*λυπεῖσθαι ἐκθαμβεῖσθαι καὶ ἀδημονεῖν* – Mt. 26.37); Mk 14.33), while he himself states that his soul is sorrowful (*περίλυτος*, *cf.* Ps. 43.5) to the point of death (Mt. 25.38; Mk 14.34). The last of these terms in particular is very strong in its emphasis on the sorrow which completely encompassed him, while *ἐκθαμβέω* (Mk) points to a state of terrified amazement. Further, in the accounts in Matthew and Mark, the prayer of Christ is thrice-repeated (Mt. 25.42-46; Mk 14.39-42). Luke, on the other hand, represents his "agony" or struggle of soul (*ἀγωνία*) to the extent of the physical manifestation of perspiration like great drops of blood (22.44). It is no simple matter to conclude that Luke lays greater emphasis on the humanity and distress, though the one prayer in Luke is portrayed with greater intensity than the three in the other accounts. Moreover, he receives the strengthening help of an angel in Luke (22.43).

Now, Hebrews lays emphasis on "prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears" to the one who was able to save him from death (*cf.* 2.15, where "fear of death" characterises those in whose existence he was participating) – he was heard, though not by deliverance from death, for in this he learned obedience (5.7-8). By several points of emphasis this is nearer to Luke's account than to those of Matthew and Mark – the physical manifestation is clear, though the same points are not noted; it is explicit that the prayer was answered; there is a stronger emphasis on obedience (the prayer in Luke begins as well as ends with an affirmation of obedience). However, even when this has been noted and due account taken of it, it must also be insisted that these facets seem to be implicit in the other accounts and that the likeness of Luke and Hebrews on these points is in emphasis rather than detail.

In reviewing the possible relation with the Qumran literature, mention was made of the similarities between Hebrews and Stephen's speech in Acts 7. Jones has used this similarity, not to show some relation with the Hellenists in the early Church, but to support the relation to the Lucan writings.⁵⁵ He considers that this aim is less ambitious "whether this be a record of primitive teaching or not."⁵⁶ However, this depends on the assumption that the speech is a free composition by Luke. Its force must surely be diminished if the

⁵² D.E. Nineham (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 120.

⁵³ *ibid.*, p. 121.

⁵⁴ *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, I, p. 100.

⁵⁵ D.E. Nineham (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 122-124.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 123.

speech is thought to be the reproduction of an independent genuine tradition. The issue, then, is not as simple as Jones has suggested unless nothing more than a community of atmosphere is in mind.

More significantly, Luke-Acts and Hebrews both lay emphasis on the ascension.⁵⁷ It has already been noted in considering the primitive *kerygma* that Hebrews does include a reference to the resurrection of Christ (13.20). However, the exaltation of Christ seems a more prominent theme than the resurrection. Now, while the resurrection figures strongly in Luke-Acts, the ascension and exaltation are also mentioned with equal importance. This is the climax of Luke's Gospel and the point of entry into the Acts of the Apostles. It seems to be the point of the talk with the two on the way to Emmaus (Lk. 24.26); it becomes the key to Acts because of its relation to the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2.33-36; cf. 5.31), but this particular emphasis cannot be said to be universal in Acts (note 3.26; 4.10; 10.40; 13.31; 17.31; 23.26; 24.21; 26.8,23). It must be noted further that this emphasis is found in the Johannine and Pauline literature (e.g., Jn 17.1-5; Phil. 2.9-11).

A similar comment to this would be due in regard to eschatology.⁵⁸ Indeed, the whole argument again and again falls short of conclusive proof of close kinship. The likeness between the thought of these writings may be at times very striking, but it is not conclusive – a fact which causes one to consider that Hebrews is not to be seen as outside the main stream of Christian thought.

(d) The Johannine Literature

Some consideration has already been given to the relation between Hebrews and the Johannine literature in the section on Qumran and Hebrews. It is not the present purpose to repeat this material. It should be noted, however, that the arguments under that head go further to show affinities with Johannine thought than to show a definite relation to Qumran thought.

C. Spicq has enumerated a great number of points from which he concludes the dependence of the author on the Johannine catechesis which was later crystallised into the Gospel and Epistles.⁵⁹

Thus, the concept of Law in Hebrews, while being on the one hand different from that of Paul, seems to approach that of John.⁶⁰ Neither Hebrews nor John consider the relation between law and works, or the tragic role of law as the instrument of sin (1 Cor. 15.56) and of condemnation (2 Cor. 3.9). Thus, in Hebrews law is equally important in both economies. It is true that "the Law" is especially the Law of Moses (7.5,19,28; 8.4; 9.19,22; 10.1,8,28). However, under the new covenant, there is a "change of law" (*μετάθεσις νόμου*, 7.12), and the new order may be set in contrast to the old Law in terms of "the power of an indestructible life" (7.16), "the word of the oath" (7.28) and "the very form of things" (10.1). John also sees the Law as pointing forward to Christ (1.14,45), but there does not seem to be an exact correspondence of ideas.

There is greater weight in the consideration of the humanity of Jesus as set out in Hebrews⁶¹ – brother of humankind (2.11,17), participating in the same flesh and blood (2.14), and in the same temptations (2.18; 4.15), weak in agony (5.7), suffering pain (12.1), hated by his fellows (12.3), humiliated and crucified outside the walls of Jerusalem (13.13).

The Johannine emphasis is parallel to this – the divine Word became flesh (Jn 1.14; 1 Jn 1.1; 4.2; 2 Jn 7); He became weary and thirsty (Jn 4.6,7; 18.28); he was rejected by his own (1.10,11), misunderstood by his fellows (4.44), object of hatred of the Jews (5.16,18; 7.1,30,44; *et al.*); he wept and was troubled (11.34-35,38; 12.27); he was crucified outside the city (19.17,20).

Against this impressive list needs to be set the parallel elements in the Synoptic witness. Here also there are statements bearing witness to Jesus' humanity – he became hungry (Mt. 4.2; 21.18); he was misunderstood and rejected by his own (Lk. 4.16-30 and parallels; cf. Mk 3.21); he incurred the hatred of the

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p. 125ff.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p. 129ff.

⁵⁹ *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, I, pp. 109-138.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, I, pp. 111-112.

⁶¹ *ibid.*, I, pp. 112-113).

Jews (Mt. 12.9-14 and parallels; *et al.*); he knew love (Mk 10.21), sorrow (Lk. 19.41), anger (Mk 3.5; 10.14) and compassion (Mk 6.34).

The Johannine emphasis is not unique, yet in both Hebrews and the Johannine writings there is set alongside this emphasis an insistence on the divinity of Jesus, especially under the title of “Son of God” (*cf.* Heb. 4.14; 6.6; 7.3; 10.29; Jn 1.34,49; 3.18; 5.25; 10.36; 11.4,27; 17.1; 19.7; this title may likewise be traced through the Johannine Epistles). It is the juxtaposition of ideas which is significant here.

A comparison of the prologue of the Fourth Gospel (1.1-18) and Hebrews (1.1-3) is quite fruitful.⁶² Both teach the pre-existence of Christ, identifying him as the Son of God and describing in similar terms his relation to the divine creative activity. The divine glory is clearly manifest in him (Jn 1.14; Heb. 1.3). Notably, in both prologues he is presented as the Revealer, under the figure of the divine Word – “God... **has spoken** to us **in a Son**” (Heb. 1.1,2), while in the Johannine prologue he is directly “the Word” (*ὁ Λόγος*; *cf.* 1.18). In both he is especially related to the light (Jn 1.9; Heb. 1.3; *cf.* 1 Jn 1.5). The theme of the cleansing of sin (Heb. 1.3), though not present in the Johannine prologue, is strongly present in Johannine thought (1 Jn 1.7,9). The trend of thought here is strikingly similar.

Space does not permit consideration of all the points raised by Spicq under this head, but the trend of the comparisons is apparent. There is no clear demonstrable dependence between these writings in detail, language or ideas. Nevertheless, there are enough points of common interest and thought to suggest, not merely that both writers stem from a background of early Christianity, but that they stand reasonably close together in the Christian tradition. The fact that there are parallels to most of these resemblances in other N.T. writings may caution against seeing the thought of these writings as too distinctive, or against regarding it as rather late and non-Palestinian. However, the fact of some such relation seems hard to deny.

(e) Summary

The cumulative result of these various lines of investigation is to demonstrate the remarkable affinity of the Epistle to the Hebrews with a wide range of early Christian development. The Epistle does not seem to fit well into a particular scheme of thought.

Although clearly not by the Apostle Paul, it is hardly true that the author shares no affinities with Paul. The arguments in favour of specific Lucan kinship fall short of proof, though they strengthen the impression that the author was in harmony with the Synoptic tradition and perhaps closest to its Lucan expression. These facets further serve to emphasise the close relationship existing between Hebrews and the primitive tradition.

Following these considerations, it is not surprising that Hebrews should be seen as related most closely within primitive Christian writings to the Johannine literature, for with the latter it has been formerly regarded as distinctly late, non-Palestinian and Hellenistic. However, without regard to the conclusion of this last problem, there seem to be good grounds for seeing the Epistle to be most akin to this literature, though this kinship is probably best expressed in general terms rather than as the dependence of either on other.

There has perhaps been a tendency to think too rigidly of development in terms of sequence. The facts seem to require the idea of co-lateral development in which Pauline thought, the theology of Hebrews and the Johannine catechesis could find a place contemporaneously. In this way, the general kinship may be acknowledged and the proximity of relationships more reasonably explained.

⁶² *ibid.*, I, p. 117ff.

Conclusion

The background of Hebrews as studied here has led to the consideration of a wide range of material and a tentative weighing of this has been undertaken in the summary at the end of each section. Some attempt must now be made to draw together these strands of evidence into a coherent conclusion. At this point it should be noted that an element of subjectivity invariably enters into the weighing of evidence. No matter what external standards are used, ultimately a great deal depends on the impression one gains from the evidence.

The evidence considered comprises a wide range of material – hermeneutical method, use of the Septuagint, vocabulary, thought-forms, philosophical presuppositions, attitude to Jewish institutions, Messianic interpretation, covenant-theology, eschatology, relation to the Synoptic tradition in matters of detail, relation to the primitive *kerygma*, the relation to Pauline, Lucan and Johannine writings. Numbers of comparisons have been quite striking, but in no case has there been evidence pointing with any conclusiveness to a strong connection with any one element of background, except primitive Christianity as a whole.

It seems clear from the polished style of the writer and from other aspects considered in connection with Philo that the writer may well have had a thorough Greek education. It seems clear that he would have known of the concepts of Greek philosophy, especially as these may have become part of common educated thought. However, these concepts are not to be seen as normative for the writer's thought. He may, indeed, have had recourse to them at various points of his argument, but at most used them as vehicles of his thought, not as the actual substance. For this reason, it is not possible to see any one concept of Greek philosophy used unmistakably, as the writer is not basically working from the philosophical presuppositions of Greek thought and remoulds phrases and concepts to the needs of his own outlook and message.

There is another point at which possible Greek influence needs to be considered – the readers' background. However, this cannot clarify the situation, since in this case one would expect the writer to use concepts more specifically. The very broad and unspecific way in which they come into the Epistle does not concur with a deliberate attempt at communication. If the background of the readers is at all reflected in the Epistle, it is most likely that it would be similar to that of the writer himself, since the readers' thought-forms do not receive any special consideration. However, that the writer is fluent in literary Greek is beyond doubt, and such acquaintance with the language would almost certainly involve some knowledge of current ideas, though, as noted, this is not to be seen as normative for the writer's thought.

With the Qumran literature, the connection tends by the nature of the case to be a broad one, as the writer expressed himself in polished Greek while the Scrolls are in Hebrew. One cannot expect to find the same kind of linguistic parallels as with Alexandrian literature.

This line of study is fruitful, however, because it illuminates the first-century Palestinian background. It has for some time been clear that, although the writer seems at first glance to be writing from a Jewish Christian point of view to Jewish Christians, it is difficult to explain it in terms of traditional Judaism. This is why there has been so much recourse to an Alexandrian background, since here there was a *rapprochement* between the Jewish religion and Greek culture. However, it is significant that the existence of a non-conformist group within Judaism had been all but removed from the records of Jewish literature and that the surviving accounts of the teaching and practice of the group seemed to indicate that they may indeed have had quite a degree of influence. Thus, while they were an exclusive kind of group, their teaching must be taken into consideration in viewing a total Palestinian background. This was formerly not possible, but now it is clear that a number of points which seemed to be explicable only in terms of late Hellenism may not have been meaningless at all to Palestinian ears. Here again, the problem is brought no nearer solution by assuming that the readers were of Essene background. Such a conclusion is too restrictive to suit the evidence. While the Qumran scrolls provide valuable information on Palestinian background and offer striking parallels in some instances with the Epistle to the Hebrews, it can hardly be said to be normative or to be clearly the specific background of the Epistle.

With relation to early Christianity, it is quite possible to focus most attention on the distinctiveness of the Epistle. There are, indeed, distinctive elements, but nonetheless the Christian background is clearly foundational. The Epistle's presuppositions, religious or philosophical, are to be sought in common Christian belief and teaching of the first century, no matter how their expression may seem to be coloured by other elements of first-century thought. Hebrews has its distinctive emphases, but that they are closely

related to the primitive tradition and *kerygma* is equally clear. This relation is confirmed by the consideration of other facets of New Testament thought.

It is somewhat difficult to place Hebrews exactly in the New Testament background, perhaps because the groups are not as distinctly different from one another as is sometimes supposed. They are all based on early tradition – some of the parallels stem from this fact. To pass beyond generalities, however, there are a number of specific points to be made. While the writer is clearly not a Paulinist, he does have points of contact with Pauline thought. Further, the facets related to the Synoptic tradition seem closest to its Lucan expression. (Yet it is hardly sufficient to say that the Pauline contacts are through Luke.) The closest contacts of the Epistle with other New Testament thought seem to be with the Johannine literature, though the relation is one of proximity rather than of dependence.

In conclusion, the philosophical and religious background of the Epistle to the Hebrews is rather complex. The background of thought of those days was itself complex and the writer cannot be tied down to one specific strand. Two strands, however, do throw light on the background of the Epistle in a general way – the Philonic and the Qumranian. Yet the only specific background is that of early Christian thought in which the Epistle does not represent the development of some other tradition (except the primitive tradition itself), so that it is related to the other writings co-laterally.

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