

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Irish Biblical Studies* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_ibs-01.php

Some Recent Developments in Research
on the Epistle to the Hebrews: II

J.C. McCullough

Use of the Old Testament

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews was steeped in the OT. The main themes in the Epistle are taken from it, the chief arguments are based on the exegesis of it, therefore it is no surprise that one of the perennial questions which has concerned students of the Epistle to the Hebrews has been the question of his use of the OT, and this has usually been dealt with under two aspects: what text was he using; what exegetical principles was he following.

Text: Naturally early scholars looked to the Masoretic text to find the source of the OT quotations in the NT (and in Hebrews). Very quickly however they began to discuss the possibility that the quotations may have come instead from the Septuagint. Already in 1650 L. Capelli /88 had come to the conclusion that the NT writers quoted from the Greek and not from the Hebrew as was generally supposed. This had been the dominant trend in particular in regard to Hebrews. /89 In recent years most scholars have considered as a proven fact, when dealing with the OT quotations in the Epistle, that the author was quoting from the LXX version of the OT. Some have even suggested that the author knew and quoted only the LXX, without any knowledge of the Hebrew language at all. /90

The question of a Hebrew or Greek Vorlage having been for most scholars satisfactorily settled, another question arose, namely, which manuscript of the LXX was the author following. The view most commonly held on this question was that put forward by Bleek, /91 repeated by C. Büchel /92 and found in many commentaries and monographs in the twentieth century. Bleek had argued against the Pauline authorship of the Epistle and as part of his evidence demonstrated that the author of the Epistle followed a text similar to that found in Codex Alexandrinus, unlike Paul who followed that represented by Codex Vaticanus. This set the main lines along which the debate over the OT quotations in Hebrews has been carried on: did the OT Septuagintal text used by the author of Hebrews resemble that represented by Codex A or Codex B, /93 and how does one explain the divergences from the texts found in these Codices. It has been the second of these questions, how does

McCullough: Hebrews, IBS 3, 1981

one explain the divergences from the main known codices of the LXX that has proved the most fruitful. Padva /94 suggested that the author had a text other than that found in Codex Alexandrinus for his Psalm quotations; Spicq /95 considered that the author used a manuscript which came from Family A (Alexandrinus), but with certain readings related to B and the Lucianic recension. In the quotations from Daniel Spicq thought that the author was following the Theodotion recension and in his quotations from Deuteronomy a liturgical text. /96 K.J. Thomas /97 argued that the author was following a Codex which was more primitive than Codex A or B, and any divergences from this primitive codex were due largely to deliberate changes on the part of the author. F. Schröger /98 gave lists of the readings where the text found in Hebrews agrees with Codex A against B and B against A; where the readings in Hebrews are paralleled in other manuscripts; and finally where the readings in Hebrews are unique. His conclusions were threefold: many quotations are paralleled in the LXX manuscripts known to us; four quotations (Heb.1.6; 10.30; 12.5; 13.5) are from a source we no longer have; many of the readings unique to Hebrews can be explained as due to the influence of the author himself. Other explanations of the divergences from the OT text found in Hebrews included the theory that the author used a testimony book /99 ; that he was using a Pre-Masoretic Hebrew text /100; that he was using a synagogue lectionary /102; that his memory failed him /103.

While work on the epistle to the Hebrews was going on, very important strides were being taken in Septuagintal studies. The project started in 1908 as the Göttingen Septuaginta-Unternehmen and after a slow and painful start it is now bearing much fruit. Its purpose was to isolate the various Septuagintal families /103 and to produce a series of editions of LXX books in which the extant manuscripts were both collated and evaluated from the point of view of the families to which they belonged. This project has not yet reached its completion but enough has been achieved to have an influence on work on the OT quotations on Hebrews /104.

As a result of the work of the Göttingen Commission and the insights gained from work on the Epistle to the Hebrews several things have become clear. First of all, the

Codices A and B are just two codices of the LXX which happen to have been preserved. It would be a rare coincidence indeed if history happened to preserve the precise LXX manuscript used by the author of Hebrews. Hence comparison of the OT text used by the author of Hebrews and that of Codex A or B alone must prove in the long run to be sterile. Secondly, the LXX textual situation at the time of writing of Hebrews was much more complicated than had been suspected. /105 Thirdly, any worthwhile work on the OT quotations in Hebrews must concentrate on the recension which has the greatest affinities to the text found in Hebrews, not one individual manuscript. Fourthly, scattered in seeming random fashion in the witnesses to the LXX are many readings, insignificant in themselves, which cannot be said to characterize any one recension. These are usually of a stylistic nature, often involving only one word and do not in any way alter the meaning of the passage. Many insignificant textual variations in the OT quotations in Hebrews belong to this class and do not betray any deep theological motive on the part of the author. Fifthly, it is perfectly possible and indeed likely that the author's textual Vorlage differed from one OT book to another. Each OT book therefore quoted in Hebrews has to be examined separately, and the conclusions drawn about the textual provenance of one OT book cannot be applied to another. It is therefore possible that the quotations from Deuteronomy /106, or the Psalms /107, belong to a different tradition than those from the rest of the OT. Sixthly, the reading in the NT could influence the Septuagintal reading found in any of the great recensions.

In view of this, work had to be continued on examining the textual Vorlage of the quotations from the OT in the Epistle. F. Ahlborn presented his thesis in 1966 to the University of Göttingen /108 in which he re-examined the LXX quotations in light of the recent Göttingen Editions of the Septuagint. This work was continued in 1971 by the author in a thesis presented to Queen's University, Belfast and in an article to be published in NT Studies. /109 The conclusion of the work so far is that in several books of the OT /110, the recension from which the text quoted by the author is fairly clear, whereas in other books there is still some uncertainty. However it seems possible to assert that the author was using whatever local text he had to hand and that he reproduced it faithfully apart from

McCullough: Hebrews, IBS 3, 1981
changes made to avoid ambiguity and for the sake of emphasis
/111.

Exegetical Methods

In discussions of the author's exegetical methods two interdependent aspects have usually been considered, and for the sake of clarity we will keep them separate. The first aspect concerns the formal exegetical rules which the author follows; the second concerns the underlying attitude which he displays toward the OT.

In the past fifty years more and more studies have been published concerning the formal exegetical rules followed both by the rabbis, /112 by the sectaries of Qumran /113 and by Alexandrian exegesis represented by Philo /114 and scholars have pointed out that the author of the Epistle follows some of these exegetical rules on occasions. Padva, for example, suggested that the author's biblical interpretation was purely rabbinic in its subject matter and its form. /115 Markus Barth considered that his exegetical method was near the Haraz ("String of pearls") method of the rabbis, which in turn seems to be reflected among the Qumranites by the collections of Testimonies. /116 Many scholars have pointed to Hebrews 7.3 as an example of the author's using the rabbinical exegetical principle Quod non in Tora non in mundo /117. Still other scholars have pointed out that the main features of the Midrash Peshar found at Qumran are also to be seen in the Epistle /118. These suggested similarities, however, concern the formal exegetical rules which the author follows, and it would be surprising if they did not in some way or other coincide with those used by other OT exegetes of his day. What is more important to consider however is his basic attitude to the OT, his "theology of the OT" and to compare that with the attitude found among his contemporaries, in particular the rabbis, the Sectaries of Qumran and Philo.

How then did the contemporaries of the author of the Epistle view the OT? All three groups under discussion shared with Hebrews a common conviction that the OT contains truths relevant for and applicable to their contemporary community. What was distinctive about each community was the kind of truth it claimed to find in the OT and the way

in which it found it.

The Rabbis looked to the OT to find a complete code of life to serve the needs of the Palestinian Jewish community. While the author of Hebrews shared with them the conviction that the OT was relevant for the everyday life of his readers and while he looked to it for examples of right living and faith, it is clear that it was not primarily to find a code of life that the author of Hebrews looked to the OT.

As for the Sectaries of Qumran, as a separatist group, the chief problem which they faced was that of defining for themselves the basis of their break with the religious point of view of the parent body. /119 They solved this problem partly by a polemic against the leaders of the larger group, and partly by re-interpretation of the scriptural traditions of the group from which they separated. /120 Their argument was that the Scriptures of the original group really applied solely to them, and justified their separate existence. Clearly however to demonstrate that a passage which seems to have been written at the time of the Return from Exile actually is talking about the situation in the first century before Christ requires some presuppositions which at first sight are not obvious. .

For the people of Qumran the presuppositions were as follows: God has communicated a secret or Raz to the prophet. This Raz could not be understood at the time it was given. It needed an interpretation, a Peshet. This Peshet would be given at the right time, the end time by God's chosen interpreter. The End-time has come. As Elliger put it: the hermeneutical principle of the exegete at Qumran can be summed up in two sentences: 1. The prophetic message has as its content the end-time; 2. The present is the End-time. /121 Revelation therefore is a two-stage process, the giving of the original Raz, and the later interpretation of that Raz at the End-time. In this way, the interpreter was able to decipher for his contemporaries the mysteries already proclaimed by God in the Sacred Scriptures. /122 In his work of decipherment the interpreter was free to use a variety of exegetical tools to make the meaning more applicable to his generation. He could for example use a textual variant, or a forced grammatical construction,

or an analogy or even the rearrangement or substitution of letters or words or expansions of supposed abbreviations in giving his interpretation, which is also creative and inspired. /123 Some scholars have seen very strong similarities between these ideas and those underlying the attitude to the OT found in Hebrews. Schröger /124 , for example, after giving Elliger's two sentences which sum up exegetical principles current in Qumran suggests that they too can be applied to the Christian community and its exegesis at the time of writing of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Certainly there are superficial similarities: both communities are the objects of special scriptural application in the endtime. But scholars have noted that in spite of these similarities, which few would deny exist /125, there is no evidence in the epistle to the Hebrews that the author looked on the OT as a Mystery which had to be deciphered by all sorts of hermeneutical methods. /126

Philo believed that the Scriptures were relevant to his generation and the exegetical principle which he followed to show their relevance was that of allegory. He assumed that texts have a twofold meaning, a literal meaning and an allegorical meaning. Only people specially endowed can interpret the allegorical meaning, and Philo seemed to put himself in that category because he used the allegorical method without reservation. /127 Scholars are divided as to whether the author of Hebrews used allegory as a principle of exegesis. Some suggest that he used it in a clear unambiguous way, "unimpeded by the historical meaning of the scriptural words, Hebrews uses and interprets the OT in the manner of the Alexandrians thinking entirely of ascertaining the deeper, true sense." /128 This is accomplished, according to Kümmel, by many means including allegorical expositions. The majority of scholars, however, are more cautious, either believing that if the author used allegorical exegesis, he used it in a limited and restricted way, /129 or denying that the author used allegorical exegesis in the way Philo used it at all. Sowers, whose book is concerned with the hermeneutics of both Philo and Hebrews, concluded by saying: "This study has underscored the lack of allegory in Hebrews as it was defined and used by the allegorists. The absence of this hermeneutical tool is particularly conspicuous because of the Alexandrian background of the

epistle...." /130

Whether scholars consider that the author used allegorical exegesis frequently, infrequently or not at all, there seems to be common consensus that it was not only his method of exegesis nor even his main one. Scholars have insisted that the author of the epistle considered that the connection between the Old and New Dispensation is a stronger and more historical one than that expressed by the concept of a Raz and its Peshar, or an allegory and its interpretation. To express this historical connection the author used a method of exegesis which is usually called typological exegesis. Typology has been described by Bultmann in the following way: "By typology as a hermeneutical method we mean the interpretation of the OT, practised since NT times, which finds in persons, events or institutions mentioned in the OT, preliminary illustrations or representations of corresponding persons, events or constitutions of the time of salvation which has broken in with the coming of Christ." /131

Underlying this correspondence between the OT and the time of Christ is the assumption that there is a divine purpose running through the ages and that parallels can be discerned between the various stages in the fulfilment of this divine purpose. /132 Hence, for example, the Exodus prefigures the Return from the Exile, which in turn prefigures the events surrounding the life and death of Jesus Christ. The correspondence between the events of the various stages in the Heilsgeschichte need not necessarily consist of analogies, they can also consist of contrasts where the exegetical argument runs as follows: what occurred imperfectly in the first age, has been perfected or fulfilled in this last Age. Again we quote Bultmann, "The combination of the idea of repetition with that of the two Aeons demands that the Antitype of the new period cannot simply be the repetition (even transferred to a higher level) of the type of the old age, but rather that it runs parallel to it, and stands in contrast with it. /133 Typological exegesis, therefore, is based on a belief that God's purposes which were imperfectly fulfilled in the old age are now being perfectly fulfilled in this new age. /134

How often does this exegetical method occur in the Epistle to the Hebrews? Earlier scholars such as Bleek, Riggenbach and Delitzsch considered that the typological method was used very frequently in Hebrews and practically all scholars assume

McCullough: Hebrews, IBS 3, 1981
that it occurs at some point or other in the epistle. /135
There has been a tendency in some circles, however, to
minimize the role played by typological interpretation in
Hebrews. Some scholars, for example, suggest that the
author was guided in his OT exegesis by the search for a
sensus plenior in the OT passages. /136 Van der Ploeg
is typical of these scholars when he says: "It is the
sensus plenior, profundior, in which he is most interested..
It is for it that he reserves the most important place in
his exegesis of the texts which cannot be referred directly
or clearly to Christ and to the new Economy." /137 Other
scholars, however, while arguing that the author looked for
a deeper meaning, as Philo did, nevertheless find it
difficult to apply to a first century author a theory of
inspiration which belongs to later Christian development.
/138.

The conclusion which seems to be emerging from discussion
of the author's attitude to the OT seems to be that "the
author of the epistle to the Hebrews, therefore, was a man
of his time. He used the text which he found in common use
in his day without being too concerned with LXX textual
criticism, he used the methods of exegesis common in his
day, and was influenced by exegetical traditions familiar
to him." /139

Individual Themes and Passages

It would obviously be impossible within the confines of
an article to discuss all the insights which have recently
been given in connection with every theme dealt with in the
epistle or every passage which has stimulated discussion.
Rather for reasons of space, we will choose two cruxes and
discuss them.

Covenant

There has been much discussion about the meaning of the
word diatheke in Hebrews. In theory the word can have two
meanings, that of "covenant" or that of "last will or
testament", depending on the usage the author was following.
In the LXX, for example, the word diatheke occurs 275 times
and is used consistently for the translation of Berith or
"covenant". "The LXX assumes that Diatheke expresses the

essential content of Berith.....it may thus be assumed that where the LXX uses Diatheke the intention is to mediate the sense and usage of Berith." /140 Since the author, as has been shown in many studies /141, was steeped in the Septuagintal Version of the OT, it could be argued that he would be following the LXX usage and so using Diatheke in the sense of "covenant". On the other hand, the word Diatheke can have another meaning, that of "Will". This meaning is attested in both the papyri and in classical Greek, and is the exclusive usage in Hellenistic times. /142 The author, therefore, could very well have been following that usage.

When the word is studied in context in the Epistle a confused picture emerges. It occurs 17 times in Hebrews; in 13 of the occasions when it occurs, it seems fairly clearly to mean "covenant", especially in such passages as Heb 8 where the "old" and "new" covenant are being contrasted, and in Hebrews 9.4 where the author speaks of the "ark of the covenant." On the other hand, in four of the occasions when the word occurs (those in 1.15 (twice), 16,17) it would seem to require the translation "last will or testament." Indeed in most modern English Versions this meaning is essential in the sentence "Now, wherever a Diatheke is in question the death of the Diathemenos must be established, indeed, it only becomes valid with that death, since it is not meant to have any effect while the Diathemenos lives ". /143 Is it possible, however, that the author, whose Greek is considered to be among the best found in the NT, would use within the space of four verses, the same word to express two different concepts, that of "last will" and that of "covenant"?

Many scholars have argued that this indeed is the case, that the author is using the same word to denote two different concepts. Some have felt that in so doing he is being self-contradictory. "He jumps from the religious to the current use of Diatheke, even at the risk of involving himself in a contradiction which shows there is no real parallel". /144 Others however, have tried to defend him against the charge of self-contradiction, saying that the characteristics of a Greek will are similar to those of the OT covenant. /145

While this has been the widely accepted view, however, some scholars have professed themselves unhappy with it. Moulton, for example, after considering the possibility

was Foedus or Factum and carried through a revision, that both Hebrews 9.16,17 and Galatians 3.15-17 "seemed to resist it". /156 From then on "by their association each passage has contributed to the obscurity of the other". /157.

His dissatisfaction with "testament" as a translation of diatheke in 9.16 and 17 was based on the following:

1. The author has used the same Greek word to convey two different concepts within a few verses
2. diathesthai is not used in the rest of the NT for making a will.
3. The author's thought would be inconsistent. It is God who makes the will, and therefore if the analogy is to be followed through it is God who should die that the will might take effect. In Hebrews, however, it is Christ who dies in order that the will should become valid.
4. Kleronomia is not found in the sense of "inheritance" as distinct from "property" or "possessions" in the NT except for Matthew 12.7 (par.) and perhaps Galatians 3.18. On the other hand he argues that the words mesites and diathesthai fit in very well with a covenant interpretation and epi nekrois (in the plural) almost demands such an interpretation.

The main contribution which Hughes /158 made to the debate in his article on Heb.9.15ff and Gal.3.15ff, was to take very seriously the OT and Ancient Near East background against which the author of Hebrews used the term diatheke. In doing this he attempted to demonstrate "not merely the possibility of interpreting Diatheke as "covenant" (in the OT sense of Berith) in these two pericopae, nor even the probability of such an interpretation, but rather the necessity for so understanding this word". /159 In carrying out his task Hughes marshalled many of the above-mentioned arguments against the traditional interpretation of diatheke as "will" in Hebrews 9.16,17. He then attempted to interpret the verses in the light of the OT and Ancient Near East covenantal practice. His basic thesis was that "in the OT those who ratified or renewed a covenant often did so by means of a self-maledictory oath ritual which involved the bloody dismemberment of representative animals. This act signified the pledge unto death of the ratifying party (or parties) should he (they) prove

McCullough: Hebrews, IBS 3, 1981

that diatheke is used consistently to mean "covenant" throughout the whole epistle, looked on his reversion to the dual meaning for the word as a "capitulation". /146 It is, therefore, not surprising that there have always been scholars who have argued for the consistency of the author, by postulating that the word diatheke means only "covenant" or only "last will" in the epistle.

Riggenbach /147 for example argued in 1908 that the author used diatheke in the sense of "Will" throughout the epistle. Two years later Adolf Deissmann, when speaking about the word diatheke "which so many scholars translate unhesitatingly Covenant" /148 said

there is ample material to back me in the statement that no one in the Mediterranean world in the first century AD would have thought of finding in the word diatheke the idea of covenant. St. Paul would not, and in fact did not. /149

and so he argued that Hebrews used diatheke consistently in the sense of "last will".

This view has been taken up again in recent years by J.B. Payne /150 in 1962 and by J. Swetnam. /151 But in view of the strong LXX evidence that diatheke was used to translate berith and in view of passages like Heb.9.4, it seems impossible to discount the author's intention to use diatheke to mean "covenant" in at least some places.

Almost 20 years before Riggenbach wrote his commentary, B.F. Westcott had expounded the theory that Hebrews was using the word diatheke in the sense of "covenant" throughout the epistle, even in 9.16 and 17. /152 This idea attracted very few supporters /153 and several commentators attacked it. /154 In 1977 and 1979, however, two important articles appeared, apparently independently, defending this view. In the shorter and earlier of the two articles Professor Kilpatrick /155 argued that the translation "Testament" for diatheke in Heb.9.16 has come about through the influence of the Vulgate which consistently and mistakenly translated diatheke by "Testamentum", even when the NT was quoting an OT passage where the Vulgate itself had the word foedus, "covenant". He said that when scholars realized that the proper translation for diatheke

McCullough: Hebrews, IBS 3, 1981
unfaithful to his (their) oaths." /160 The persons
therefore did not have to die in order for the treaty to be
ratified, but instead animals were killed to "represent" the
death of the ratifier. With this background in mind Hughes
interpreted Hebrews 9.16,17 as follows: /161

Assertion (9.16): Where there is a covenant, it is necessary
to represent (introduce=phero) the death of the
ratified.

Reason: (9.17): ("These are legal reasons having to do with
covenant procedure")

Assertion: for a covenant is made legally secure on the basis
of (over) the dead (animals) (Hebrews has epi
nekrois, i.e. the plural which suits this theory
much better than it suits the theory of a will,
where only the death of one person is required)

Reason: Since it is never valid while the ratifier lives.

Clearly this theory is very attractive. It fits in well
with the author's argument that the New Covenant is superior
to the old. It explains the use of the rather strange
pheresthai, diathemenou and epi nekrois. It gives a consist-
ent meaning for Diatheke throughout all the epistle. But is
it possible? The difficulty comes in 9.17b: "A covenant
cannot possibly have force while the ratifier is alive".
Literally speaking this is just not true of an OT Covenant.
The ratifier does remain alive. It is the animals who die
as his representatives. Knowing this, would the author have
used such an unambiguous phrase as 9.17b, **rather than keeping**
to the much vaguer "a covenant is made legally secure on the
basis of the dead (animals or humans)" of 9.17a. It is on
the answer to this question that the theory that diatheke
should be translated "Covenant" in Hebrews 9.16,17 will be
decided. In any case no one writing in the next few years
on the subject will be able to neglect the two articles which
have revived a theory which had lain dormant for so long.

Hebrews 6.4-6

In this famous passage and in Hebrews 10.26-29 and 12.17,
the author is arguing that if one has been brought into the
light, and tasted the gift of heaven, and received a share of
the Holy Spirit, and appreciated the good message of God and
the powers of the world to come, and yet in spite of this has
fallen away, then it is impossible to be renewed a second time

since he has wilfully crucified the Son of God and openly mocked him. Apart from the meaning of the participles photisthentas etc., this passage presents two main problems: 1. Is the author really teaching that post-baptismal apostasy is unforgiveable, as was clearly taught in the later Shepherd of Hermas /163; 2. Is his doctrine paralleled to that of some sectarian groups? /164

In regard to the first question scholars have tried to soften the apparent harshness of the teaching. C. Spicq, for example, in his recent commentary asks whether the impossibility of conversion is simply psychological and moral dependent on the spiritual attitude of the apostate, and thus making a "conversion" inconceivable, or whether it is absolute, tied in to the nature of sin for which God, the author of salvation, refuses pardon. He rejects the latter alternative saying that it would limit God's mercy, and suggests that in the former case God can still intervene to overcome human resistance. The impossibility therefore for Spicq and many commentators is simply an apparent impossibility given the facts of the situation, but with God all things are possible. /165

A second way to soften the harshness of such teaching is that suggested by P. Proulx and L. Alonso Schökel /166 and followed by L. Sabourin /167, who suggest that the impossibility refers, not to a second conversion, but rather to crucifying the Son of God a second time. Sabourin's translation of the passage therefore is, "For it is impossible to crucify afresh the Son of God for the sake of one's repentance, mocking him, so as to restore a second time (or "reinstate" - lit., "make new again") those who have once been enlightened.... and have apostatized (lit., "have fallen away", "lapsed")." /168 This translation fits the wider context of Hebrews but it does not seem to fit the immediate context. The point of the passage is that the author is not going to repeat the essentials of the Christian faith because it is useless to do so, since "it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have been once enlightened...." (Hebrews 6.4,6) This is borne out by the example taken from nature and given in Hebrews 6.7,8. It is difficult to see why he would wish to point out at this stage in his argument that it is impossible to crucify Jesus a second time.

A third way of softening the harshness of the passage is

McCullough: Hebrews, IBS 3, 1981

that followed most recently by Elliott /169 who took the two present participles (anastaurontas and paradeigmatiz-ontas) as temporal and so translated, "...it is impossible to bring them back again to repentance while they are crucifying the Son of God with their own hands and making mock of his death". F.F. Bruce's criticism of a similar theory however though made ten years earlier still has to be answered, when he said, "To say that they cannot be brought to repentance so long as they persist in their renunciation of Christ would be a truism hardly worth putting into words." /170

If however one accepts that the passage together with Hebrews 10.26-29 and 12.17 says what it seems to say, that it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened if they fall away, the problem arises: how did the author come to such an opinion which seems to contradict much of what is known of the theology of the early church? There have been several answers to this question.

Carlston /171 offers three explanations. The first is based on what he calls the "horizontal eschatology" of the epistle, and assumes that because the time before the parousia is short there will be no time or opportunity for repentance. As he points out, however, "the relationship between the shortness of time and the impossibility of repentance is never clearly spelt out." /172

His second suggestion is based on what he calls "vertical eschatology" and assumes that the underlying theme of the epistle is the true worship of God, worship which requires sacrifice and in the case of the epistle, the sacrifice of Jesus. Since this sacrifice has already taken place at the end of the ages, cannot be repeated, and is retroactive in effect as were the sacrifices of the Old Covenant, no further sin is possible. This indeed may be the logical conclusion of the author's theology but it is not stated in the epistle and in Hebrews 6.4-6 it is certainly not given by the author as the reason why there can be no second repentance.

Carlston's third suggestion is more clearly based on the text of Hebrews 6.4-6. He suggests that the author is arguing, "Since one who has fallen away has forsaken the efficacy of that sacrifice (that of Christ), and since there is no other, there can be no restoration. Only through the

McCullough: Hebrews, IBS 3, 1981
veil, i.e., the flesh of Christ, can men enter the new
sanctuary....To spurn this sacrifice is thus to make
fellowship in the worshipping community impossible." /173

Buchanan /174 develops this latter idea with
reference to a "treasury of merits" which he sees as being
an important part of the author's doctrine of repentance
and atonement. He argues that in the theology of the
author of the epistle Christ's sacrifice makes up the merits
required, but "the merits which were added by that sacrifice
could be used once, but no more. Once a Christian had been
forgiven, there were no further sacrifices possible to build
up the treasury of merits upon which one might draw." /175

The theories both of Carlston and Buchanan, however, seem
to me not to do justice to the subtlety of the author's
thought and to limit too much his view of the atonement.
In my view /176 the author's doctrine of the impossibility
of a second repentance follows naturally from his belief,
stated so many times in the epistle that we must not spurn
the gifts of God. Just as a field which has been well
watered by the rain is expected to yield fruit and is not
kept indefinitely but is eventually burned and its crops
changed, just as in the Old Covenant the neglect or spurning
of God's gifts led to punishment and the loss of those gifts
so even more so in the New Covenant, the spurning of the
greatest gift of all will have the direst consequences and
will result in the losing of that gift.

Conclusions

Clearly many questions concerning Hebrews remain
unsolved. Progress has been made however along several
fronts. With increased knowledge about the OT text as it
was preserved at the time of the writing of the epistle,
some advances have been made in determining the OT text the
author used and his attitude to it; with the increased
interest in "rhetorical criticism" and its wider application
to NT books, knowledge of the author's literary structure
has been greatly increased. It is however in the area of
the religious and cultural milieu from which Hebrews arose,
that in my view most progress has been made and the most
promising work has been done. As a result of greatly in-
creased knowledge of the religious situation prevailing in
the Roman world in the first century AD, scholars have been
in a much better position to place the epistle in that

milieu, and at the same time to use the epistle to help complete their picture of that culture. It is along these lines that we can hope to see some fascinating research in the future.

Notes (Continued)

88. "Quaestio de Locis Parallelis Veteris et Novi Testamenti", Critica Sacra, Paris 1650, quoted in E. Ellis, Paul's Use of the Old Testament, London 1957, p2, N5.
89. Cf. J.C. McCullough, Hebrews and the Old Testament, Unpub. Diss., Queen's University Belfast 1971, p3, N2,3.
90. Cf S. Sowers, op.cit.p75; A. Nairne, The Epistle of Priesthood, Edinburgh 1913, p273.
91. F. Bleek, Der Brief an die Hebräer, Berlin 1828, 1836, 1840; cf. espec. Vol 1 p369f.
92. "Der Hebräerbrief und das alte Testament", Th.S und K, 1906, p338.
93. Cf. H.B. Swete, An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek, Cambridge 1900 p403 who agrees that the OT text in the Epistle resembles that of Alexandrinus. W. Leonard, op.cit. argues the claims of Vaticanus; cf. P. Padva, Les Citations de l'ancien testament dans l'Épître aux Hébreux, Paris 1904; James Moffatt, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, Edinburgh 1924, plxii; C. Spicq, Comm.op.cit. Ti p335.
94. P. Padva, op.cit. p100
95. Comm.op.cit. Vol I, p335f
96. ibid
97. K.J. Thomas, The Use of the Septuagint in the Epistle to the Hebrews, Unpublished Dissertation presented to Manchester University, 1959 and "The Old Testament Quotations in Hebrews", NIS 11 (1965), pp303-325.
98. F. Schröger, Der Verfasser des Hebräerbriefes als Schriftausleger, (Biblische Untersuchung, Bd.4), Regensburg 1958.
99. The first really detailed working out of the theory that a Testimony Book may lie behind some or all of the OT quotations in the NT was done by Rendel Harris, Testimonies, Cambridge 1920, 2 vols. He deals with Hebrews in vol.II pp43-50. In more recent years F.C. Synge, Hebrews and the Scriptures, London 1959, has been a strong supporter of the Testimony Book hypothesis; cf. too P. Prigent, Quelques testimonia messianiques, THZ 15 (1959), p421. The theory however has been rejected by most recent scholars including Spicq, P, deg, Thomas, Bruce, Howard, Katz, Kis'emaker etc.
100. Cf. G. Howard, "Hebrews and the OT Scriptures", NT 10 (1968), pp208-216.
101. V. Burch, The Epistle to the Hebrews, Its Source and Message, London 1936; quoted in E. Grässer, art.op.cit. p205
102. Cf. E. Grässer, op.cit. p205 and Kömmel, RGK, Vol 5, p1517 and literature quoted there.
103. This of course is based on the assumption that there are Septuagintal families to be isolated. For a different view that the differences in Septuagintal readings are due to different translations from the Hebrew rather than scribal modifications of an archetype, cf. P. Kahle, The Cairo Geniza, London 1947; I.W. Manson, Dominican Studies 2, 1949, pp183ff.
104. The following Septuagintal books have been published: Genesis, Deuteronomy, 1 Esdras, Esther, 1,2,3 Maccabees, Psalms and Odes, Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom of Ben Sirach, 12 Prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Baruch, Thrones, Letter of Jeremiah, Ezekial, Susannah, Daniel, Bel and the Dragon.
105. Cf. for example, J. Barthélemy, "Redecouverte d'un chaînon manquant de l'histoire de la Septante", RB 60 (1953), pp18-29 and Les Devanciers d'Avoulla, Leiden 1963 and the subsequent very full discussion of his theory of a Kai ge recension.
106. Cf. C. Spicq, comm.op.cit. Vol I, p335 who thinks that the quotations from Deuteronomy come from a liturgical version.
107. P. Padva, op.cit., p100.
108. E. Ahlborn, Die Septuaginta-Vorlage des Hebräerbriefes, Unpub. Diss. Göttingen University 1966.
109. McCullough op.cit.

110. Especially Jeremish and the Psalms
111. cf J.C. McCullough, op.cit.
112. J. Bonsirven, Exégèse rabbinique et exégèse paulinienne, (Bibliothèque de Théologie Historique, Paris 1939; D.Daube, "Rabbinic methods of interpretation and Hellenistic rhetoric", Hebrew Union College Annual, 1949 and "Alexandrian methods of interpretation and the rabbis", Festschrift Hans Lewald, Basil 1953.
113. Cf W.H. Brownlee, "Biblical Interpretation among the Scribes of the Dead Sea Scrolls", BA 14 (1951), pp. 54-76; U. Betz, Offenbarung und Schriftforschung in der Qumransekte, Tübingen 1960; K. Elliger, Studien zum Habakuk-Kommentar vom toten Meer, Tübingen; Eva Osswald, "Zur Hermeneutik des Habakuk-Kommentars", ZAW 1956.
114. H.A. Wolfson, Philo, Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, 2 volumes, Cambridge Mass., 1947; S.G. Sowers, The Hermeneutics of Philo and Hebrews, Zurich 1965.
115. Art.op.cit.p102f
116. M. Barth, "The OT in Hebrews", Current Issues in NT Interpretation, ed. by W. Klassen and G.F. Snyder, London 1962, p64.
117. Among the commentators who assume this cf. Moffatt, Windisch, Wickham, Hewitt, Bruce, Montefiore, Héring, Spicq.
118. Cf. B. Gärtner, "The Habakkuk Commentary and the Gospel of Matthew", Studia Theologica 8 (1955) p13 who points out that Heb.10.5ff is an example of pesher exegesis; R. Schnackenburg, op.cit. p81 stresses the Alexandrian nature of the exegesis.
119. Lucetta Moury, The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Early Church, Chicago, 1962, p93.
120. Cf. J.C. McCullough, "Melchisedek's varied role in early exegetical tradition", Theological Review, 1/2 1978, pp52-66, esp. p66.
121. K. Elliger, Studien, op.cit; F.F. Bruce, Biblical Exegesis, op.cit. p 10.
122. C. Spicq, art.op.cit. p383; F.F. Bruce, Biblical Exegesis, p10.
123. Cf. W.H. Brownlee, op.cit. 54-76.
124. F. Schröger, op.cit. p280f.
125. E.g. H. Kosmala, op.cit.p16; F.F. Bruce, op.cit.p220, point out these similarities.
126. Cf. J. Coppens, op.cit. p259.
127. For a description of Philo's use of Scripture, cf. H.A. Wolfson, op.cit. Vol.I, p116; J. Danielou, Philon d'Alexandrie, Paris 1958, p119
128. W.G. Kömmel, Introduction to the NT, London 1965, p277.
129. Cf. L. Vénard, "L'Utilisation des Psaumes dans l'Épître aux Hébreux", Mélanges Padechard, Lyons 1945, p264, who thought that the author used allegorical exegesis much less in the Psalms than in the Pentateuch; Spicq, Comm. Vol I thinks the only exegesis which is truly allegorical in that of Hebrews 13. 10-13.
130. S.G. Sowers, op.cit. p137; Westcott, Comm. p200; R.V.G. Tasker, The OT in the NT, Philadelphia 1947; G.B. Caird, "The exegetical methods of the Epistle to the Hebrews", Canadian Journal of Theology, 5 (1959) p44ff.
131. R. Bultmann, "Ursprung und Sinn der Typologie als hermeneutischer Methode", ThL 1950, p206.
132. Cf. Westcott, op.cit.p481
133. Op.cit. p207
134. Obviously this is very similar to the promise-fulfilment method of exegesis but its basis is very different. One is based on the assumption that God repeats acts in two ages, the other that God foretells what he is going to do in the future without reference to any doctrine of two ages.
135. Cf. Westcott, p481; Moffatt, p1xii; Spicq, Vol I, p346; W. Manson p184ff; Michel p288; Bruce, p1 among commentators; also L. Goopelt, Typos, Die typologische Deutung des alten Testaments im Neuen, Göttersloh 1939, p195
136. For a survey of authors who share this view cf. R.C. Brown, The sensus plenior of Sacred Scripture, Baltimore 1955.
137. J. van der Ploeg, "L'exégèse de l' A.T. dans l'Épître aux Hébreux", RB 54 (1947), p228.
138. Cf. E. Grässer, op.cit. p211
139. J.C. McCullough, Diss. p420

