

## 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,<sup>1</sup> 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*).

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<sup>1</sup> 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.”<sup>2</sup> 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.”<sup>3</sup>

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.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> 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.”<sup>6</sup> 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

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

<sup>3</sup> *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).

<sup>4</sup> 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.

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

<sup>6</sup> 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.”<sup>7</sup>

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,”<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> 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.”<sup>10</sup> 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

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

<sup>8</sup> *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.”

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

<sup>10</sup> *op. cit.* I, p.334.

this version is in disagreement with the Hebrew, it is the Greek of the LXX which is always reproduced.”<sup>11</sup> 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 מַסַּח (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;<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup>

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.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, pp.334-335.

<sup>12</sup> 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.

<sup>13</sup> 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.”<sup>14</sup> 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,<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup> While *ἐνάρεστος* 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.<sup>17</sup> 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

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, I, p.42.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, I, pp.41-53.

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

<sup>17</sup> 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.”<sup>18</sup> 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),<sup>19</sup> 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).<sup>20</sup>

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

<sup>19</sup> B.F. Westcott, *op. cit.*, p.7.

<sup>20</sup> 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 presuppositions<sup>21</sup> 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*”.<sup>22</sup> 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”<sup>23</sup> 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.<sup>24</sup>

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.<sup>25</sup> 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 δὲ κινούμενος) 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*);<sup>26</sup>
- (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.<sup>27</sup>

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,<sup>28</sup> though

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

<sup>22</sup> *SJT*, 16, 4, p.419.

<sup>23</sup> 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.

<sup>24</sup> *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.

<sup>25</sup> *op. cit.*, I, p. 50.

<sup>26</sup> 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.

<sup>27</sup> Spicq, *op. cit.*, I, pp.51-53.

F.C. Grant considers that “it is only a step to such an identification.”<sup>29</sup> 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 *ῥῆμα* (6.5; 12.19). No particular interpretation of the forms in 4.13 and 5.11 can alter this interpretation, while the occurrences of *ῥῆμα* 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).<sup>30</sup> 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 – *ῥομφαίαι 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.<sup>31</sup>

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.

<sup>28</sup> 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.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, p.29.

<sup>30</sup> 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).

<sup>31</sup> *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.<sup>32</sup> 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.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> 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.”

<sup>33</sup> C.K. Barrett (*op. cit.*) comes to a similar conclusion.