

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 *τῶν ἀγίων* 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 ἁμαρτία 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.