

SUSAN E. DOCHERTY

The Use of the  
Old Testament  
in Hebrews

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**Mohr Siebeck**

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Susan E. Docherty

# The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews

A Case Study in Early Jewish  
Bible Interpretation

Mohr Siebeck

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## Preface

This book is a revised version of my PhD thesis, submitted to the University of Manchester in August 2007. I should like to take this opportunity to express my warm thanks to my PhD supervisor, Professor Philip Alexander, for all that he contributed to the genesis and development of my dissertation, and especially for introducing me to the whole new world of contemporary research into targumic and rabbinic scriptural interpretation. I am grateful also to several other members of the Faculty of Religions and Theology at the University of Manchester for their encouragement and interest in my work during my time there, particularly Professor George Brooke and Professor Alexander Samely, who gave up his time to discuss with me his own research and the ideas of Arnold Goldberg, and allowed me to consult the manuscript of his *Forms of Rabbinic Literature and Thought: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) in advance of its publication. It goes without saying, however, that any misunderstanding or misrepresentation of their work in this book is my own responsibility. My thanks go also to my PhD examiners, Dr. Todd Klutz of the University of Manchester and Professor William Horbury of the University of Cambridge, for their advice, which has informed this reworking of my thesis, and their support for its publication. Professor Horbury had previously supervised me as both an undergraduate and postgraduate student at Cambridge, so it was particularly fitting that he should have been involved in this next stage of my academic journey. To him, and to all those who taught me both at Cambridge and elsewhere, particularly Professor Graham Davies, I owe a great debt of gratitude for their ability to inspire in me a sustained interest in the field of biblical studies.

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critique and deep knowledge of this subject. Finally, I thank Dr. Lieve Teugels for alerting me in correspondence to several useful articles applying or evaluating the methods of the ‘Goldbergian School’.

I am grateful to Cambridge University Press for permission to reproduce here as part of chapter four a slightly revised version of my article: “The Text Form of the OT Citations in Hebrews Chapter 1 and the Implications for the Study of the Septuagint”, *New Testament Studies*, forthcoming, 2009. I wish to thank also the editor of the WUNT II Series, Professor Jörg Frey, for his encouragement and for accepting my manuscript for publication. Finally, sincere thanks are due to Dr. Henning Ziebritzki and his editorial team at Mohr Siebeck Publishers, particularly Tanja Mix, for their expert and efficient technical assistance in the production of this book.

Susan Docherty  
Birmingham, January 2009

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## Chapter 1

# Introduction: Hebrews as an Exemplar of Early Jewish Bible Interpretation

### 1.1 Context: The ‘Parting of the Ways’ Debate

This study of the use of the Old Testament in Hebrews begins from the premise that at the time when the letter was written, Christianity was historically still a form of Judaism: the so-called ‘parting of the ways’ had not yet occurred, and Hebrews is therefore a Jewish text, which belongs just as much to Jewish as to Christian history.<sup>1</sup> This statement is hardly controversial in theory today, but its significance has had surprisingly little impact on contemporary study of the New Testament or on the study of Judaism. For all that historians of early Christianity acknowledge its Jewish origins, most regard the contemporary Jewish literature and thought as merely ‘background’ to the New Testament, and seem to find it hard to really accept that early Christianity was a form of Judaism. The situation is even

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<sup>1</sup> Discussion about the question of the ‘parting of the ways’ between Judaism and Christianity has received new impetus in recent years. There is a growing consensus that the rupture between ‘Judaism’ and ‘Christianity’ took place later and more gradually than used to be thought. One of the earliest attempts to argue this position was by Philip Alexander: see Alexander, Philip S., “‘The Parting of the Ways’ From the Perspective of Rabbinic Judaism.” Pages 1–25 in *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways A.D. 70 to 135*. Edited by J.D.G. Dunn. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992; see also Boyarin, Daniel, *Dying for God. Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999; and *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004. More recently there has been a tendency, perhaps somewhat exaggerated, to regard the separation as never having been total and complete: see, for example, some of the contributions in Becker, Adam H. and Annette Y. Reed, eds. *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003. Certainly there is growing evidence that even in the patristic period Christian biblical exegesis operated in much the same way as rabbinic exegesis of the same period, and with considerable knowledge of the Jewish tradition. This is perhaps hardly surprising if early Christian and Jewish bible interpretation are seen as typical of hermeneutics more generally in the Graeco-Roman world, on which see Alexander, Philip S., “*Quid Athenis et Hierosolymis?* Rabbinic Midrash and Hermeneutics in the Graeco-Roman World.” Pages 101–124 in *A Tribute to Geza Vermes: Essays on Jewish and Christian Literature and History*. Edited by P.R. Davies and R.T. White. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990.

more striking on the side of Jewish Studies: few historians of Judaism consider treating early Christianity as a manifestation of late Second Temple Judaism, and as integral to the history of Judaism as, say, the Dead Sea Scrolls. It is, however, the contention of this study that to fully understand its interpretation of the Old Testament, Hebrews must be taken seriously as an important exemplar of early post-biblical Jewish exegesis. This approach will demonstrate the extent to which the study of the New Testament can be profoundly enriched by engagement with current work in the field of Jewish Studies, and the way in which it may also contribute to scholarly understanding of ancient Judaism. It thus makes a move in the direction urged by James Dunn:

A crucial step forward will be taken when Christian scholars recognise that the beginnings of Christianity cannot be understood without reference to Jewish documents and traditions from the late Second Temple period; and when Jewish scholars recognise that the bulk of the NT writings are also Jewish documents and that many of them have a right to be counted as witnesses to the breadth and character of Second Temple Judaism as much as their own later documents.<sup>2</sup>

## 1.2 Aims: A New Approach to the Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews

The decision to undertake yet another study of the use of the Old Testament in Hebrews is one which might require some justification. I shall attempt to demonstrate, however, that there is still much to be uncovered about the exegetical techniques and axioms of the author of Hebrews, despite the existence of an already extensive body of literature on this subject. In particular, I shall draw attention to important developments which have taken place in recent decades in the study of early Judaism which are of fundamental importance for the subject of early Christian bible exegesis, but which are being largely ignored by New Testament scholars. That this academic segregation between the study of early Judaism and the study of early Christianity persists is in part due to the way in which commenting functions within the field of New Testament Studies. Commentary remains a central and prestigious mode of researching the New Testament writings, so that the production of a major commentary on an indi-

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<sup>2</sup> Dunn, James D.G., *The Partings of the Ways Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity*. London: SCM Press, 1991, 251. See also the study of the second century Epistle of Barnabas and the writings of Justin Martyr by William Horbury, which concludes that they "...could properly be assigned to a Christian sub-section of Jewish literature." (Horbury, William, *Jews and Christians in Contact and Controversy*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998, 161).

vidual book is widely seen as the culmination of a scholar's career. In this climate, anyone writing such a commentary inevitably feels the weight of scholarly tradition, and under some obligation to construct his or her new commentary in dialogue with its predecessors, but this often necessitates the following of a pre-determined approach and agenda, from which it becomes difficult to break free to consider fresh evidence.

There are two crucial aspects of the issue of the use of the scriptures in Hebrews which I shall argue here have not been adequately considered by New Testament scholars to date. The first is the provision of a precise account of the exegetical techniques employed by the author and a full consideration of what these reveal about his underlying view of scripture. As I have indicated above, great strides are being made in the study of early Jewish biblical hermeneutics, particularly in relation to midrash and targum. Sophisticated methods have been put forward for the analysis of the interpretation of the scriptures in both of these genres, which potentially have relevance to the use in Hebrews of the same canonic text. The study of the exegetical procedures of rabbinic midrash is at present at the cutting-edge of the study of early Jewish hermeneutics, and, arguably, also more widely of hermeneutics in the ancient world.<sup>3</sup> The aim of this new wave of research has been to go beyond some of the impressionistic statements of earlier scholarship to devise more refined and accurate ways of describing the interpretative processes at work in the Jewish texts. It is time, then, I suggest, to make a serious attempt at determining whether these new approaches can be adapted to explaining the use of scripture in the Letter to the Hebrews. The second area in which I suggest there is considerable scope for the development of existing work relates to the text of the Greek bible in the first century. The question of what *form* of bible may have been in front of the writer of Hebrews is clearly germane to the issue of his scriptural interpretation.<sup>4</sup> The study of the Septuagint has progressed greatly in the past twenty years, partly impelled by the discovery of the Qumran biblical texts, yet much of this advance is not reflected even in recent studies of the New Testament.

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<sup>3</sup> On this point, see in particular Alexander, "*Quid Athenis et Hierosolymis?* Rabbinic Midrash and Hermeneutics."

<sup>4</sup> That the author was making use of Greek rather than Hebrew biblical texts is a given in Hebrews scholarship today; further comment on this point is to be found in chapter 4, below.



### 1.3 Method and Overview

Although I contend that there are significant gaps in previous research into the interpretation of the Old Testament in the Letter to the Hebrews, it would obviously be foolish to ignore the often excellent work which has already been undertaken on this subject. The second chapter of this study is therefore devoted to an extensive review and evaluation of what I consider to be the major studies of Hebrews published within the past one hundred and fifty years. This time frame is partly determined by the need to keep this section within manageable limits, but the choice of starting date is not entirely arbitrary: it does, importantly, allow for the inclusion within the survey of the classic commentaries by the late nineteenth century biblical scholars Brooke Foss Westcott and Franz Delitzsch, texts which are still referred to by most modern writers on Hebrews, and which can legitimately be regarded as the earliest serious critical engagements with the letter. This survey, which cannot be exhaustive, but which is sufficiently broad to identify central issues and significant trends, illustrates how changing movements in biblical criticism over time are reflected in studies of Hebrews. Thus writers on Hebrews have been as affected as other biblical scholars by the rise and fall of the form-critical movement and the History of Religions School, for example, by developments in thinking about the relative importance of Jewish and Hellenistic influences on early Christianity, and by modern approaches to studying the biblical texts such as literary criticism. This historical review of the existing literature on Hebrews highlights also some differences in the approaches taken to the letter by British, European (German and French), and North American commentators. The main focus throughout chapter two is, however, on evaluating the treatment of the interpretation of the Old Testament in Hebrews in these major studies and commentaries. The influence on their approach to this subject of prevailing tendencies in the wider field of the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament emerges, as is to be expected, with, for example, '*sensus plenior*', 'typological', or '*peshet*-like' serving at different times as fashionable descriptions of the scriptural exegesis of the author of Hebrews. A number of these studies contain valuable insights, but a close reading of others demonstrates a surprising lack of detailed identification of the author's exegetical techniques and axioms. The often general and imprecise accounts of the biblical interpretation in Hebrews which they contain, and the over-reliance on unexplained and unexamined phrases like 'reading scripture through a christological lens', or 'employing standard Jewish exegetical techniques', surely cannot be left as the final word on this subject.

Having thus identified key strengths and weaknesses of previous work on Hebrews, I turn to the crucial question of what methods I should apply to my own investigation of the letter's Old Testament interpretation. The studies surveyed in chapter two naturally brought a variety of approaches to bear on the text, from the early days of historical and philological criticism,<sup>5</sup> through efforts to 'justify' the author's biblical exegesis as still normative for Christians today,<sup>6</sup> to the literary and socio-rhetorical readings which have emerged in the latter part of the twentieth century.<sup>7</sup> My own preferred starting point was to consider what recent work on scriptural exegesis in other early post-biblical Jewish writings might bring to an analysis of Hebrews. The necessity of setting all the writings of the New Testament in the context of first century Judaism has, as I have noted above, long been recognised by scholars, at least in theory, and was given new impetus in the second half of the twentieth century by the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Numerous articles and books drawing comparisons between the biblical exegesis of the Qumran texts and the New Testament have since appeared, amongst the most well-known of which are those by Joseph Fitzmyer<sup>8</sup> and Timothy Lim.<sup>9</sup> However, I have found more to interest me in current research into scriptural exegesis in midrash, research with which New Testament scholarship has by and large not kept pace, and from which, I suggest, it has much to learn.

Chapter three of this study, therefore, provides an overview of the most significant work on midrash which has been published in the second half of the twentieth century. Some of the issues on which scholars disagree are drawn out and discussed, such as the limits of the term 'midrash', and whether the midrashim are best read as loose collections of traditional material assembled over time, or as whole documents with a coherent overall theme and purposeful authorship. In this section, the work of Arnold Goldberg and his students is introduced, as it is their approach which has inspired the particular analysis of the use of the Old Testament in Hebrews which I shall offer in chapter five. From the mid-1970s until his death in

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<sup>5</sup> See e.g. Spicq, Ceslas, *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, Études Bibliques. 2 vols. 3rd edition. Paris: Libraire Lecoffre, 1952–53 (see below, section 2.1.4.1).

<sup>6</sup> As in Leschert, Dale F., *Hermeneutical Foundations of Hebrews: A Study in the Validity of the Epistle's Interpretation of Some Core Citations From the Psalms*. Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1994 (see below, section 2.3.8).

<sup>7</sup> See e.g. DeSilva, David A., *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle "to the Hebrews"*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2000 (see below, section 2.1.6.1).

<sup>8</sup> Fitzmyer, Joseph A., "The Use of Explicit Old Testament Quotations in Qumran Literature and in the New Testament." *New Testament Studies* 7 (1960–61): 297–333.

<sup>9</sup> Lim, Timothy H., *Holy Scripture in the Qumran Commentaries and Pauline Letters*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.

1991, Goldberg practised a method of studying rabbinic texts known as form-analysis, which begins with the identification and detailed description of the various literary forms present in the texts, including the individual hermeneutical operations by which a scriptural segment was interpreted. One of Goldberg's former students, Alexander Samely, has since developed this approach, and applied it in particular to the exegesis of scripture in the targumim and midrashim. Samely's work is described in some detail in chapter three, because it has been very helpful for my own efforts to identify and explain the exegetical techniques present in Hebrews. This form-analytical method is virtually unknown amongst British New Testament scholars, perhaps because Goldberg's work appears too narrowly technical, or was originally written in rather dense German, so one aim of this study is to introduce it to a wider audience. The research of both Goldberg and Samely is concerned to bring to the surface the understanding of the nature of scripture held by the rabbinic interpreters, as this is revealed through their exegesis. This question of the underlying scriptural axioms and hermeneutical presuppositions is also, I shall argue, an extremely significant aspect of the Old Testament interpretation of the author of Hebrews which has received far too little attention from commentators to date.

Before beginning the analysis of some passages of Hebrews which forms the climax of this study, I found it necessary to try to establish the form of the author's scriptural text with some precision. This is something of a vexed question, as scholars differ rather sharply in their conclusions about his faithfulness to his source in biblical citations. I have already drawn attention above to the fact that one important weakness which emerged from the survey of current literature on Hebrews was a lack of awareness on the part of many commentators of recent developments in the field of Septuagintal Studies. Some commentaries on Hebrews were written before the benefit of the discovery of the Qumran biblical texts, for example, or before the publication of the entire Göttingen edition of the Septuagint. Some studies compare the text of the Old Testament citations in Hebrews only with the major Septuagint Codices Alexandrinus and Vaticanus, whilst others draw conclusions about the author's tendency to diverge from his scriptural source for theological reasons on the basis of only brief and general discussions about text form. In chapter four, therefore, I highlight some of the main developments in Septuagintal research which I consider most relevant for the study of the New Testament, referring in particular to the impact of the discovery of the Qumran corpus, and to current thinking about Greek versions of the Book of Psalms. As this chapter makes clear, contemporary Septuagintal scholarship stresses much more than was the case in the past the pluriformity of the biblical text in

the first century CE, and the need to consider the form of every Old Testament book and each individual scriptural citation on its own terms rather than drawing general conclusions. I conclude this section with an examination of the text form of the nine direct Old Testament citations present in Hebrews chapters 1 and 3–4, drawing on all available evidence and taking full account of the conclusions of the most recent research into the Septuagint. My aim is to provide a more solid basis than is to be found in many existing studies for discussion of the accuracy (or lack of it) with which the author reproduces his biblical source, and of the techniques with which he exegetes it.

Chapters two to four thus prepare the ground for the investigation of the interpretation of the Old Testament in Hebrews undertaken in chapter five of this study, where I apply to the text the kind of precise descriptive-analytical method pioneered by Goldberg and further developed by Samely. I hope to demonstrate that this approach both illuminates new aspects of the biblical exegesis of the author of Hebrews, and also offers a way of explaining some of the features of his use of the Old Testament which have long been noted by commentators but never adequately explained, such as his frequent employment of citations containing first person direct speech. Drawing on Samely's work in particular has provided me with access to a new vocabulary for explaining the hermeneutical operations in evidence in Hebrews, a very precise terminology which could be of great value for making comparisons between the scriptural exegesis of Hebrews and that employed in other New Testament books, the writings of the early church fathers, and the early post-biblical Jewish literature.

The whole of the Letter to the Hebrews is, of course, so threaded through with Old Testament interpretation that almost any part of it could profitably be selected for detailed analysis of this subject. I have, however, made a deliberate decision to consider only the exegesis of explicit Old Testament citations. This provides a clear body of text to work on, text in which there can be no dispute that the author was intentionally interpreting (rather than, for example, unconsciously echoing) scripture, and about which there is usually (although not always, see for example Heb 1:5, 6) little argument about which biblical verses are being exegeted. Due to the constraints of time and space, I then narrowed down my focus further to two sections of Hebrews which appear on the surface to be very different in their use of scripture: chapter 1, a catena of citations, several of which are relatively short in length, and chapters 3–4, which offer a sustained exegesis of a longer citation, drawing in another scriptural text. This selection of passages provides the opportunity to ask what I consider to be another important question, namely whether the biblical interpretation in these chapters would reveal commonalities as well as differences under-

neath their divergent surface forms. In short, then, this study seeks to offer new insights into the use of the Old Testament in Hebrews – by asking more precise questions about the author’s hermeneutical operations, by proposing a new way of describing his exegetical techniques, by exploring the previously neglected question of his scriptural axioms, and generally by integrating the analysis of this New Testament book into the broader fields of research into the Septuagint and early Judaism.

## Chapter 2

# The History of Previous Scholarship on Hebrews

## 2.1 Major Commentaries on Hebrews

### *2.1.1 Introduction: Parameters of the Literature Review*

The task of reviewing existing scholarship on the Letter to the Hebrews is a particularly daunting one. Faced with the vast number of significant commentaries and studies available, some principles of selection must be brought to bear on the material. The main focus of this evaluation of previous studies of Hebrews will be their treatment of the subject of the use of the Old Testament in the letter. Section three of this chapter will review some of the many books and journal articles dealing specifically with this topic, but as the citation and interpretation of scripture is so fundamental to Hebrews as a whole, it seems important to include within this literature survey also some of the major commentaries on the text published in English, German and French, and a representative sample of studies of aspects of the letter's theology and structure. An analysis of fewer commentaries in some depth rather than a briefer survey of a larger number better serves the main purpose of this chapter of highlighting the main strengths and any recurring weaknesses of previous research into the Old Testament exegesis in Hebrews. This review will therefore be limited to volumes published within the past one hundred and fifty years, and to those commentaries which I consider to be representative of common approaches to Hebrews, drawing where possible on the major series. Following some brief introductory remarks about each commentary, the way in which they tackle the issue of scriptural interpretation in Hebrews will be evaluated in detail.

This time frame, although driven partly by the need to keep the literature survey within manageable proportions, is not simply arbitrary. This period encompasses major phases in the history of critical study of the New Testament such as: the changing attitude to koiné Greek consequent on the discovery of manuscripts such as the Oxyrhynchus Papyri in 1897; the influence of the History of Religions School, with its focus on Christianity as one among many religious phenomena in the ancient world; and the new emphasis on the 'Jewishness' of the New Testament which has

emerged during the latter part of the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> As these scholarly movements are often reflected in studies of Hebrews, I have also taken the decision to consider the commentaries in chronological order of publication, rather than to group them in some other way, by language, for example, or according to whether they are primarily theological or philological in approach. This method of proceeding should demonstrate most clearly the relationship of each volume to the broader context of New Testament study and thus best illustrate the ways in which the treatment of the use of the Old Testament in Hebrews has developed over time. It may also bring to the surface the effect on some New Testament commentators of the general political and social climate of their time, which should not be underestimated. Ernst Käsemann's work on Hebrews, for example, clearly reflects his particular situation as an opponent of the Nazi regime in pre-war Germany, as he later acknowledged:

By describing the church as the new people of God on its wandering through the wilderness, following the Pioneer and Perfecter of faith, I of course had in mind that radical confessing church which resisted the tyranny in Germany and which had to be summoned to patience so that it could continue its way through endless waste.<sup>2</sup>

I am not aware of any similar historical survey of studies of the interpretation of the Old Testament in Hebrews, so this chapter should enable me to provide some new insights into the strengths and weaknesses of current scholarship, and also to indicate some important areas where existing work may be in need of further development.

### 2.1.2 Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century Scholarship

This survey begins with two commentaries produced by pioneers of the critical study of the New Testament, the first by the influential German scholar Franz Delitzsch, and the second by one of the giants of nineteenth century English biblical studies, Brooke Foss Westcott. Their work has proved to be of enduring value, so these commentaries have been chosen for inclusion here because of their importance as representative examples of the best of early critical scholarship on Hebrews from across Europe.

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<sup>1</sup> Neill, Stephen and Tom Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861-1986*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988 remains a useful and readable introduction to the work of key New Testament scholars and to the major shifts in the critical study of the New Testament.

<sup>2</sup> Isaacs, Marie E., *Sacred Space: An Approach to the Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 73. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992, 13. She gives the source of this quotation as: Käsemann, Ernst, *Kirchliche Konflikte*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982, 17, as cited in the Translator's Preface to Käsemann, Ernst, *The Wandering People of God: An Investigation of the Letter to the Hebrews*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1984, 13.

### 2.1.2.1 Franz Delitzsch

Delitzsch is concerned to offer in his commentary both an account of the theology of Hebrews and a very detailed study of the text, often drawing on linguistic and thematic parallels found in classical Greek sources and in Philo. There is reference throughout to a wide range of previous studies on Hebrews spanning the ancient, mediaeval, and Reformation periods, as well as more contemporary work, especially that written in German, as might be expected.<sup>3</sup> Delitzsch assumes that the original audience of Hebrews were Jewish Christians, probably living in Palestine, and he suggests a date of writing before 66CE.<sup>4</sup> He accepts that the letter as it stands cannot have been written by Paul, but is unwilling to abandon altogether some kind of connection with Paul, perhaps mediated by Luke.<sup>5</sup> Among the strengths of this commentary are Delitzsch's extensive knowledge of the whole field of biblical studies and his familiarity with a great breadth of ancient Greek literature. He was, however, writing before the discovery of various material which has had a profound impact on New Testament Studies in the twentieth century: new manuscripts of the Septuagint such as Codex Sinaiticus,<sup>6</sup> for example, the Oxyrhynchus Papyri, which revolutionised the scholarly approach to koiné Greek, and the Qumran texts which have added so significantly to the sum of knowledge about Second Temple Judaism.

Other areas of weakness in Delitzsch's work strike the modern reader very forcibly. Thus, although he claims to be taking account of historical criticism,<sup>7</sup> in fact he often appears to accept at face value claims of the biblical text which would be widely questioned today. He assumes, for example, that the words of several psalms were spoken by the historical King David at specific times in his life,<sup>8</sup> and attributes the words of Jer 38(31):31–34 (cited at Heb 8:8–12; cf. Heb 10:16–17) without question to the historical prophet Jeremiah speaking after the conquest of Jerusalem.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, he regards some Old Testament passages as directly prophetic of

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<sup>3</sup> Delitzsch, Franz, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*. 2 vols. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1868. The German original was published in 1857. The annotated bibliography (see Vol. 1: 22–35) indicates the extent of Delitzsch's engagement with previous work on Hebrews.

<sup>4</sup> See Delitzsch, *Commentary*, Vol. 1: 4, 20–21; Vol. 2: 46, 140, 332, 414.

<sup>5</sup> Delitzsch, *Commentary*, Vol. 1: 5, 18. See also Vol. 2: 407–409.

<sup>6</sup> T.L. Kingsbury made the decision to introduce into his English translation of the book a few references to Codex Sinaiticus, discovered only after the publication of the German original; see the Translator's Preface to Delitzsch, *Commentary*.

<sup>7</sup> See e.g. Delitzsch, *Commentary*, Vol. 2: 150.

<sup>8</sup> See e.g. Delitzsch, *Commentary*, Vol. 1: 124; Vol. 2: 150.

<sup>9</sup> Delitzsch, *Commentary*, Vol. 2: 39.



Jesus,<sup>10</sup> and his work is heavily influenced by his own religious beliefs as a committed Christian. Thus, at times it seems that Delitzsch is as concerned to defend traditional views of the atonement in the face of contemporary challenges to them as to explain the text of Hebrews.<sup>11</sup> It is his attitude to the Jewish background of the letter which is perhaps the most striking aspect of his commentary, however. Delitzsch was partly of Jewish descent, and was a renowned Hebraist and rabbinic scholar. He clearly had a detailed knowledge of ancient Jewish sources, and does occasionally bring in to his discussion of the letter a reference to the targumim,<sup>12</sup> or the midrashim,<sup>13</sup> especially where these seem to him to support the viewpoint of Hebrews. Yet he does so surprisingly infrequently, and never turns to these sources to seek an explanation for the author's exegetical techniques or attitude to scripture. This silence is surely an eloquent one, as it is not the result of his ignorance of the comparative Jewish material, especially given that a Christian tradition of illuminating the New Testament from rabbinic parallels is in evidence from the seventeenth century onwards in the work of, for example, Johannes Schöttgen and later John Lightfoot. Presumably, having himself, as he saw it, accepted the truth of Christianity over Judaism, Delitzsch sought to emphasise the differences rather than similarities between the two religions and their approach to scripture. This seems the most probable explanation for the dismissive comments about the "...empty outward forms of Jewish religion..."<sup>14</sup> which appear in the commentary from time to time, for example, and for the way in which he has arguably seriously underplayed the Jewish roots of the theology and biblical interpretation of the author of Hebrews.

Many of these criticisms of the commentary in general apply specifically to Delitzsch's treatment of the use of the Old Testament in Hebrews. On the positive side, he includes some detail about the original scriptural context of some of the citations, and is knowledgeable about variant readings of the text of Hebrews. His discussion of the differences between the form of the citations in Hebrews and the Septuagint is, however, hampered

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<sup>10</sup> See e.g. Delitzsch, *Commentary*, Vol. 1: 62–63; Vol. 2: 149.

<sup>11</sup> Delitzsch refers directly in the preface (*Commentary*, Vol. 1: xi) to the controversy caused by the publication of Hofmann, Johann C.K. von, *Der Schriftbeweis: Ein theologischer Versuch*. Nördlingen: C.H. Beck, 1852–55, and he frequently returns to this theme throughout the commentary, especially in treating Hebrews chapter 9 (see e.g. Vol. 2: 84–85) and in his excursus on the theology of the atonement (Vol. 2: 418–463).

<sup>12</sup> Targumic renderings of Ps 103:4(LXX) are cited, for instance: see *Commentary*, Vol. 1: 74.

<sup>13</sup> Delitzsch argues, for example, that a belief in the superiority of the coming messiah over Moses (cf. Heb 3:1–6) is attested in midrashic exegesis of Isa 52:13; see *Delitzsch Commentary*, Vol. 1: 157; cf. Vol. 1: 168–171, 312.

<sup>14</sup> See Delitzsch, *Commentary* Vol. 2: 46.