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

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

HEBREWS IN RECENT SCHOLARSHIP. (PART 2)¹

J. C. McCullough

For other scholars, the trigger for the crisis in the Christian community addressed by the Epistle was the Fall of Jerusalem. Raymond Brown² felt that the Fall of the Temple would have received prominent attention in Rome, all the more so, since it had been a difficult military campaign for Rome, and so the administration would have needed to emphasise the victory parade for propaganda reasons. He asked whether some Christians in Rome may have looked for a replacement to the temple, thinking it might be superseded by the levitical sacrificial cult of the desert. -- 'a cult no longer tied down to a fixed building in Jerusalem, and for that reason suitable to a spiritual Israel in the diaspora; a levitical cult not weighed down by the corruption of wealth and splendour and so more suitable to a pilgrim people?' So the author has to write to tell them that the sacrifice of Christ is more effective than the cult in any earthly sanctuary could ever be. According to Brown, therefore, the temptation was not to fall back into Judaism *per se*, but into a more conservative Jewish Christianity.³ Marie Isaacs read the book against the background of first century Judaism's attempt to come to terms with the loss of the temple. 'When the cultic centre of the nation was no longer available, some people adopted beliefs and cultivated experiences which in some sense could replace experiences which had once been connected with the now destroyed Temple and with the immanence of God it signified.'⁴ In this historical context, the author's response would be: 'Shrines come and go, but the only one you can trust is heaven itself — that shrine in which our

¹ This article continues from *IBS* 16 April 1994, p. 86. The bibliography at the end of the first part of the article is not repeated.

² Brown 1983 p. 154

³ Brown 1983 p. 156

⁴ Gruenwald, Ithamar, *Apocalypticism and Merkavah Mysticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1980) p. 47. Quoted Isaacs 1992.

Melchizedekian high priest has now entered and thereby gains access for all those who will follow him'.⁵

For others, however, the recipients faced, not so much the danger of relapsing but rather the failure to grasp the opportunities afforded by Christianity, the yearning for the certainties of Judaism and the temptation to be held back by the conservatism of their Jewish and Jewish Christian friends. Manson had proposed this idea many years ago when he suggested the recipients were failing to grasp the challenge of leaving the safety of a *religio licita* and embark boldly on a Gentile Mission. Barnabas Lindars⁶ argued that the recipients were having difficulty, not with their mission theology, but with their theology of the forgiveness of sin. They believed that the Atonement on the Cross was sufficient for all past sins, but were concerned about those which were committed after they became Christians, the kind of sins that in their old Jewish faith were dealt with on the Day of Atonement. Lindars conjectured that they were tempted to return to the Jewish sacrificial system to achieve ease of conscience and that the Epistle was written to encourage them to go forward boldly and confidently in their new faith. Morna Hooker⁷ pictured the recipients as Christians who had already been cut off from Judaism and the Jerusalem temple, either because they had been excommunicated or because they were Diaspora Jews who rarely got to Jerusalem, but who would rather like to ... or perhaps the epistle was written after AD 70 and there was no Jerusalem to go to. So the author assures them, that they have no need of further sacrifice and challenges them to move forward in their Christian faith. Morna Hooker put it very well: 'What need is there for candles, when you have been plugged into the mains?'⁸

⁵ Isaacs 1992 p. 30-31 Isaacs also suggests that the group addressed may be a specialist group, 'a group in training for some form of Christian 'rabbinate''.

⁶ Barnabas Lindars, *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews*. (Cambridge: CUP, 1991) p. 8ff.

⁷ Morna Hooker, *Continuity and Discontinuity: Early Christianity in its Jewish Setting* (London: Epworth, 1986)

⁸ cf. Glaze, 'Introduction to Hebrews.' *Theological Educator* 32 (1985) 20-37 who argued that the purpose of the Epistle was to get the recipients to leave the synagogue and make a complete

In spite of much energy being exerted on the question, therefore, little consensus has emerged on the whereabouts of the recipients and the problems they were facing in their Christian lives.

Genre, Structure and Style

Scholars have long since noticed that while *Hebrews* ends as a letter it begins without the usual epistolary protocol of salutation to readers⁹. This has raised the possibility that either the salutation at the beginning has been lost, or that the greetings at the end have been added by a later hand. Both solutions have been discussed in the period under review. In his earlier commentary in 1991 and in the later one of 1993, Paul Ellingworth suggested tentatively¹⁰ that there may have been a descriptive first leaf glued on to the manuscript and that this leaf was later accidentally detached from the body of the text, or deliberately omitted as inappropriate when the manuscript was copied, though as he himself pointed out, this would have had to have happened very early as there is no manuscript evidence of it.¹¹ As regards the possibility of chapter 13 or parts of it, being an addition by a later hand, Erich Grässer discussed this problem at length and came to the conclusion that, because the author *wanted* the letter to be anonymous, he could not be the writer of the Pauline ending¹²; hence Grässer assumed that the ending was written by a

break with Judaism. Written to a congregation of Jewish Christians at Rome in the late 60's, who were tempted to seek security from imperial persecution in Judaism because of its status as a legal religion.

⁹ See the famous quotation by H. E. Dana, cited by R. E. Glaze, *No Easy Salvation* (Zachary, LA: Insight, 1966) p. 9: 'it begins like a treatise, proceeds like a sermon, and closes like an epistle'.

¹⁰ Ellingworth 1993 p. 61f.

¹¹ F. Renner *An die Hebräer: ein pseudepigraphischer Brief*. (Münsterschwarzach: Vier Türme, 1970) had suggested that Rom 16: 25b, 26. was the lost precept. Against this see Weiss 1991 p. 36.

¹² Grässer 1990 p. 17; 'Allein Jesus Christus wird als exklusive personale Autorität und Ursprungsnorm der Tradition reklamiert.'; A. Vanhoye, 1981 p. 69. Juliana Casey argued that *Hebrews* 13: 19, 22-25 'were probably added at a later date'. (p.

later hand. Hans-Friederich Weiss,¹³ on the other hand, considered whether the ending was added by a later hand in order to give the Epistle a Pauline stamp and came to the conclusion that it must in fact have been added by the author...otherwise the redactor would have added a prescript as well as a postscript. According to Weiss, by adding the greetings in chapter 13 the author was deliberately placing himself in the continuum of primitive Christian tradition. Most commentators, in fact, take the view that Hebrews 13 is from the hand of the author of the rest of the book.¹⁴

Closely related to the status of the ending is the question as to whether this is a general treatise or whether it is addressing a particular situation. Alexander Nairne¹⁵ had argued that even though the popular view of his time was that Hebrews was 'late, artificial, reflective, a treatise rather than a letter, a sermon belonging to an age of sermons. written to a group of scholarly men like the author ...The Epistle smells of the study, not the open air of life where history is being made' that nevertheless it was a serious book, addressing a serious situation and the majority of scholars since then would agree with him. It is addressing a real-life situation¹⁶, though

xiii) though on p. 94f she also said that she is convinced 'the chapter is an integral part of Hebrews.'

¹³ Weiss 1991 p. 746f. He said that this ending is 'nichts anderes als Ergebnis einer bewussten und gezielten Reflexion des Autors des Hebr zu seiner eigenen Stellung in der Kontinuität der urchristlichen Verkündigungsgeschichte.' (747).

¹⁴ eg. Backhaus 1993 p. 192ff., Kistemaker 1984 p. 3f., Vanhoye, *La Structure littéraire de l'Épître aux Hébreux*. (*StudNeot*, 1: Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, (1963); (he sees two distinct parts 1-13:21 which is a *λόγος τῆς παρακλήσεως* and 13:22-25 which is 'un court billet d'envoi.'; Lane 1991 p.14; Bruce 1990; Bénéteau 1989 vol. 2, p. 207; März 1989 p.; Hagner 1990; Stedman, 1992, p. 149; Wilson 1987, p. 237; Morris 1983 Attridge 1989

¹⁵ A. Nairne, *The Epistle of Priesthood*. Edinburgh. 1913 p. 7

¹⁶ eg. Backhaus 1993 p. 199; Strobel 1991 p. 7 says it is not the 'theologisch-spekulative Werk einer bedeutenden schriftgelehrten Gestalt der Urkirche' but rather a *λόγος τῆς παρακλήσεως*; against H. Köster, *Einführung in das Neue*

as Grässer has pointed out: 'Für ein konkretes Gegenüber ist der Hb eine Spur zu unpersönlich; für ein ideelles Publikum nicht unpersönlich genug'.¹⁷ But this does not solve the problem as to whether it is a letter sent to a community or whether it is a sermon or a treatise. Kistemaker argued that in view of the last chapter it is indeed a letter, it 'is one of the general Epistles of the New Testament'.¹⁸ On the other hand, Grässer did not want to refer to it as a letter, but he considered it to be a 'book', in fact the only one in the NT that has only one theme, that of Christ the true high priest.¹⁹ But if it is more than a letter, then how can one best describe it?

Some scholars have looked to the author himself and his phrase *λόγος τῆς παρακλήσεως* in 13:22²⁰. They have noted that this phrase also occurs in Acts 13:15 in the context of a synagogue service in Antioch of Pisidia, where the phrase seems to refer to a sermon preached to the people, a sermon which consists of both warning and comfort. They argued, therefore, that the phrase, as used in Hebrews refers to all of the epistle, not just the paranetic sections or parts of chapter 13²¹, and may have the semi-technical meaning of a sermon preached in a synagogue.

Whether the term *λόγος τῆς παρακλήσεως* is a semi-technical term or not, however, there is considerable agreement that the book is a homily²², though scholars differ in their definition of

Testament. (Berlin: New York: Walter De Gruyter, 1980) p. 711 who thinks it is a general letter.

¹⁷ Grässer, 'Der Hebräerbrief 1938-1963'. *Theol. Rundschau*. N.F. 30. 1964 p. 149 published again in *Aufbruch und Verheissung* p. 12.

¹⁸ Kistemaker 1984, p. 4

¹⁹ Grässer 1990 p.15

²⁰ cf. In particular Übelacker 1989 pp. 25ff and pp. 210ff and the literature quoted there, especially Roland Bjerkelund, 'PARAKALO' *Bibl. Theol. Norv.* 1 (Oslo, 1967).

²¹ cf. Franck, E, *Revelation Taught. the Paraclete in the Gospel of John* (CB, NT Ser. 14) (Lund: , 1985) p. 32; J. Thurén, *Das Lobopfer der Hebräer. Studien zum Aufbau und Anliegen von Hebräerbrief 13* (Åbo: Åbo Akademie. 1973) 49-56.

²² cf. J. Berger, 'Der Brief an die Hebräer, eine Homilie', in *Göttinger Theol. Bibliothek* iii. 3 (1797) 449-459 for one of the earliest suggestions regarding the genre.

down and sent or whether it is a homily which was meant to be sent in the first place. Among the many scholars who describe it as a homily we would mention Swetnam²³, Grässer²⁴, Weiss 1991²⁵, Lane 1991²⁶, Michel²⁷, Thyen²⁸, Schierse²⁹, Isaacs 1993³⁰ and Vanhoye³¹. The disinclination of some scholars to describe the book

²³ J. Swetnam, 'On the literary genre of the Epistle to the Hebrews'. *NT* 11 (1969). He considered it to be basically a homily, with a few words attached at the end after the manner of a letter. p.216.

²⁴ In his review article p. 153 he thought that the idea that the Jewish-Hellenistic synagogue sermon influenced Hebrews is now *communio opinio* and in his commentary he described it as a 'gesandte Predigt'.

²⁵ Weiss 1991 p. 41 described it as a Lehr-und Mahnschrift, which is in the form of a 'niedergeschriebene Predigt'.

²⁶ Lane 1991 p. lxxv He considered it to be a 'sermon to be read aloud to a group of auditors who will receive its message not primarily through reading and leisured reflection but orally.'

²⁷ Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*. 11th. Ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966) p. 25 'Hier im Hebr haben wir aber die erste Predigt vor uns, die alle Mittel der antiken rhetorik und sprachformen kennt und ins Christentum überträgt.'

²⁸ H. Thyen, *Der Stil der Jüdisch-Hellenistischen Homilie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1955) described Hebrews as the only example of a fully preserved Homily. p. 106. He saw the Epistle as part of the homiletic tradition which had its origin in the synagogue and which can also be detected in all or part of Philo' *Leg, All, 4 Macc., 3 Macc., Tobit, Wis.Sol., Test XII Patr., James, Acts 7, Barn., Hermas* and the *Didache*.)

²⁹ F. J. Schierse, *Verheissung und Heilsvollendung. Zur theologischen Grundfrage des Hebräerbriefes*. Münchener theologische Studien, 1:9 (München: Karl Zink Verlag, 1955) p. 206. He described the Epistle as 'schriftlich niedergelegte Homilie'. 'die erste liturgische Predigt.'

³⁰ Isaacs 1993 Described it as a sermon, regardless of what we do with chapter 13.

³¹ A. Vanhoye, *Prêtres anciens, Prêtre nouveau, selon le Nouveau Testament*. (Paris, Editions du Seuil. 1980) tr. by J. Bernard Orchard as *Old Testament Priests and the New Priest* p. 66 'The Epistle to the Hebrews has all the appearance of being an admirably composed homily or sermon.'

as a 'sermon' often stems from their particular definition of a sermon, rather than any fundamental disagreement on the book itself. For example, Rissi³² argued that it could not be described as 'Niederschrift einer Predigt' but then he went on to describe it as consisting 'aus gelehrten, theologischen Meditationen über die Probleme seiner Leser'. Many would be happy to attend a church where the minister took that as the model for his or her sermons.³³ Similarly Windisch in 1931 had described *Hebrews* as a 'erbaulicher Traktat oder ein Vortrag mit brieflichem Schluss' which he understood to be a narrower definition than a homily. If one takes a wide definition of a homily, however, that it is a work addressed to a specific or a typical community to challenge and comfort them, then the general consensus seems to be that *Hebrews* is a 'gesandte Predigt', written by an ἀνὴρ λόγιος, to use Grässer's phrase, using the considerable rhetorical skills at his disposal.

Such a wide definition of a sermon, however, is of very little use in helping scholars to define with any precision the genre of *Hebrews*³⁴ and so attempts have been made to be more precise in assessing how the author uses his rhetorical skills and in discovering which rhetorical model he is following. Spicq had already argued that he was using the model of the classical lecture, opening his work with a πρόθεσις, in which authors chief propositions are stated (Heb 1:1-4, these are recapped at 4:14-16; 8:1-2 and 10:19-22); then following this with a doctrinal introduction, a διήγησις (1:5-6:20) which lead on to the main demonstrative argument, the ἀπόδειξις, a Christological exposition; finally came the epilogue, the ἐπίλογος in

³² Rissi 1987 p. 13.

³³ Weiss 1991 p. 37 called it 'einen theologischen Traktat, eine theologische Abhandlung.'

³⁴ cf. H. Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament* vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), p. 273; Karl Paul Donfried, *The Setting of Second Clement in Early Christianity*, (Leiden: Brill, 1965) p. 26. When speaking about 2 Clement he says 'The basic thrust of this section will be that the term "homily" is so vague and ambiguous that it should be withdrawn until its literary generic legitimacy has been demonstrated.'

12: 14-29. Lawrence Wills³⁵ studied the form of the sermon in Acts 13:14-41, and applied the results of that study to Hebrews, 1 Clement, some sermons in Acts and the Pauline Epistles, other early Christian sources and some Jewish sources and came to the conclusion that there was a discernible pattern in them consisting of *exempla*, conclusion and exhortation. He tentatively suggested a background in Greek rhetorical tradition ... 'Jews and Christians could have learned something of Greek rhetoric in the Hellenist schools ...', but admitted that he was unable to trace the arrangement which he had suggested in conventional Greek rhetoric. In an article appearing four years later, C. Clifton Black³⁶ in a response to Lawrence Wills argued that both the content and the structure of the sermons quoted by Wills (Black concentrated on the primary sermon quoted by Wills, that in Acts 13: 13-41, he did not deal with Hebrews directly) correspond much more closely to Hellenistic rhetoric than Wills allowed. Übelacker³⁷ followed the same lines, arguing that Hebrews belongs fundamentally to the genre of an exhortation, an urgent appeal to his readers, following a practice already established among rhetoricians in Classical antiquity. He demonstrated that chapters 1-2 consist of the *exordium* (1:1-4), the *narratio* (1:5-2:18) with the *propositio* (giving the main problem and question for the entire discourse) in 2:17f.. The *postscriptum* is found in 13:22-25. Attridge³⁸ in his commentary called it an 'epideictic oration' (as opposed to judicial and deliberative orations which usually are concerned with courts and governing bodies

³⁵ Lawrence Wills, 'The form of the sermon in Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity', *HTR* 77 (1984) 277-99. Quotation from page 299.

³⁶ C. Clifton Black, 'The Rhetorical Form of the Hellenistic Jewish and early Christian Sermon: a Response to Lawrence Wills', *HTR* 81 (1988) 1-18.

³⁷ Übelacker 1989. P.66ff cf. too H. Thyen, *Der Stil der Jüdisch-Hellenistischen Homilie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1955; J. Swetnam, 'On the literary genre of the Epistle to the Hebrews'. *NT* 11 (1969), 261-269. For similar patterns in the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* see John. J. Collins. *Between Athens and Jerusalem* (New York: Crossroad. 1983) 158-159.

³⁸ Attridge 1989 p. 14.

respectively) 'celebrating the significance of Christ and inculcating values that his followers ought to share'. Clearly this is a field of research that will be expanded greatly in the coming decades.

In the eighties too progress has been made in defining more precisely the structure of Hebrews with Vanhoye³⁹, Dussaut⁴⁰, Feld⁴¹, Ellingworth⁴², Weiss⁴³, März⁴⁴; Übelacker⁴⁵, Attridge⁴⁶, Cosby⁴⁷, Lane⁴⁸ making important contributions. There have also been several articles written on the theme by Black⁴⁹; Ebert⁵⁰, Lindars⁵¹, MacLeod⁵², Meier⁵³, Rice⁵⁴ and Swetnam⁵⁵ and while there is certainly no consensus about the structure itself, there does

39 Vanhoye 1989

40 Dussaut 1981

41 Feld 1985 23-29

42 Ellingworth 1993 p. 50-58

43 Weiss 1991 p. 42-51.

44 März 1989 p. 14-18

45 Übelacker 1989 p. 40-48

46 Attridge 1989 p. 14-20

47 Cosby 1988. He studied the rhetorical structure of Hebrews 11.

48 Lane 1991 p. lxxiv-xcviii. Lane (p. xcff) also drew attention to an unpublished dissertation by G. H. Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews: a textlinguistic analysis*. Unpublished dissertation, Southwestern Baptist theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, 1991.

49 Black, D. A. 'The Problem of the Literary Structure of Hebrews: An Evaluation and a Proposal'. *GraceTheolJourn* 7 (1986) 163-177 and 'A note on the structure of Hebrews 12: 1-2'. *Biblica* 68 (1987), 543-551.

50 Ebert, D. John. 'The Chiastic Structure of the Prologue in Hebrews,' *TrinJournal* 13 (1992) 163-179.

51 Lindars, B, 'The Rhetorical Structure of Hebrews.' *NTStud* 35 (1989).382-406.

52 MacLeod, D. John. 'The Literary Structure of the book of Hebrews.' *Bibliotheca Sacra* 146 (1989), 185-197.

53 Meier, J. P, 'Structure and theology in Heb 1:1-14. *Biblica* 66 (1985) 168-189

54 Rice, G. E. 'The Chiastic structure of the central section of the Epistle to the Hebrews.' *AndUnivSemStud* 19 (1981) 243-246.

55 Swetnam, J. 'The Structure of Hebrews 1: 1-3:6,' *MelTheol* 43 (1992) 58-66 .

seem to be a growing consensus on the methodology to be used in determining a structure.

Date

Very little progress has been made in the eighties and early nineties on the question of date. There seems to be a fairly widespread consensus that 96 CE. is the *Terminus ad quem* for the writing of the Epistle, because 1 Clement writing from Rome to Corinth on that date, is dependent on the Epistle. It is generally agreed that 1 Clem 36: 2-5 is dependent on Hebrews 1: 3-13; 1 Clem 17:1 on Heb 11:37 and 1 Clem 17:5 on Heb 3:5. But even that is not certain. There have been those who have questioned whether Clement is dependent on Hebrews or whether they simply both followed a common Christian tradition⁵⁶, though apart from a mention in Attridge (cf. previous note n. 56) that debate has not surfaced in the period under review. Moreover, the date 96 for 1 Clement is not written in stone. It simply is an estimate based on internal evidence in the Epistle. The assumption is that 1 Clement 1:1 with its reference to 'the sudden and repeated misfortunes and calamities which have befallen us' refers to the persecutions towards the end of the reign of Domitian (81-96) and so 1 Clement is dated towards the end of that reign, in 96 CE. As Attridge, however, pointed out in his commentary⁵⁷, the date of 1 Clement and so the *terminus ad quem* of the writing of Hebrews could really be

⁵⁶ cf. G. Theissen *Untersuchungen zum Hebräerbrief*. Studien zum N.T. Band 2. (Gütersloh:Mohn, 1969) and K. Beyschlag *Clemens Romanus und der Frühkatholismus*, (Tübingen: Mohr, 1966).. Against them Cockerill, G.L., 'Hebr. 1:1-14, 1 Clem 36:1-6 and the High Priest Title.' *JBL* 97 (1978, 437-440); Hagner, D. A., *The Use of the Old and New Testaments in Clement of Rome* Nov.Test.Suppl. 34 (Leiden: Brill. 1973) who thinks that 1 Clement's dependence on Hebrews 'seems certain'; Paul Ellingworth, 'Hebrews and 1 Clement: Literary Dependence or Common Tradition,' *BZ* 23 (1979) 262-69; M. Mees, 'Die Hohepriester-theologie des Hebräerbriefes im Vergleich mit dem Ersten Clemensbrief' *BZ NF* 22 (1978) 115-124; Braun 1984 p. 3; Attridge 1989 p.6f.

⁵⁷ Attridge 1989 p. 7.

anywhere between 70 and 140, though he favours between 90 and 120. A further hint as to a *Terminus ad quem* might be given by the mention of Timothy. If this is the Timothy mentioned in connection with the Apostle Paul, then it is unlikely he would still be alive after the turn of the century.⁵⁸

The other date that scholars have depended on to date the Epistle is the destruction of the temple in 70 CE. Two characteristics of the Epistle are noted in this regard. Firstly, that the sacrificial cult is described in the present tense, and secondly that the author who is arguing that the cult is no longer efficacious for Salvation, does not use the argument that it has actually been destroyed by the Romans. Hence, the conclusion is that the epistle must have been written before A. D. 70⁵⁹. This evidence, however, is of very doubtful value. Firstly, there is no real evidence that sacrifices did stop definitely in Jerusalem after the Roman attack in A.D.70 .. they may have continued in a much reduced form until the Revolt of Bar Kochba in 135, which finally put an end to all Jewish cultic activity in Rome.⁶⁰ Secondly, Jewish and Jewish-Christian literature, such as 1 Clement 40: 4-5., Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* and *Against Apion* 2.77. as well as Mishnaic documents, which we know were written after the destruction of Jerusalem, nevertheless refer to the activity of the temple cult in the present tense, as does

⁵⁸ Attridge 1989 p. 9.

⁵⁹ A large number of commentators of our period take this view: Leon Morris 1983 p. 12, Donald Hagner 1990, Donald Guthrie 1990, Strobel 1991 (p. 11 'die Tatsache, dass mit keinem Wort der katastrophalen Einschnitt des Jahres 70 n.Chr. erwähnt ist oder sonstwie in den Blick gerät, lässt u.E. nur eine Datierung vor 70 n.Chr. zu'; he also considered that 6:10 refers to the Jerusalem collection), Sören-Ruager 1987, Barnabas Lindars 1991 p. 20. Vanhoye in his book *Old Testament Priests and the New Priest* tr. by Bernard Orchard (Petersham, Mass: St. Bede's Publications, 1986) p. 66 n. 5 suggested the last years of Nero's reign, that is towards the end of the sixties; Hugedé 1983 p. 216, n. 17. William Lane 1991 also argues for a date around 64 (p. lxvi), but considers that the destruction of the Temple is irrelevant for discussion of the date (p. lxiii)

⁶⁰ cf. Clark, K. W., 'Worship in the Jerusalem Temple after A.D.70'. *NTS* 6 (1969-70) 269-80

Hebrews.⁶¹ Thirdly, there would have been an expectation that the Temple would (eventually) be rebuilt, as it was after the First Exile, hence any argument based on its destruction would have been temporary. The author's point is that Christ's sacrifice has destroyed for ever the efficacy of the Temple sacrifices. The destruction of the Temple cannot, therefore, be used with any certainty to date the Epistle.

Other criteria are equally uncertain; the fact that the church according to 2:7 was second generation at least, that in 13:5 it seemed to be succumbing to temptations usually associated with established churches; that at least some of its leaders have died (13:7) .. all these criteria are too vague to allow us to pinpoint a date with any certainty. In view of all these uncertainties, there has been no unanimity in the period under review on the part of scholars regarding the dating of the Epistle. Many wished to date the Epistle before 70 C.E.⁶². Other scholars placed it between 70 and 100, For example, Raymond Brown⁶³ placed it between 75 and 90; S. J. Kistemaker put it in the early eighties. Weiss⁶⁴, Grässer⁶⁵, Hegermann⁶⁶, März⁶⁷; Braun⁶⁸ and Rissi⁶⁹ between 80 and 96. Clearly, scholarship in the eighties and early nineties, has not solved the problem of the date of the Epistle!

Conclusion

It has been impossible in such a short article to do more than touch on a few of the issues raised in the study of Hebrews in the past thirteen years⁷⁰. In particular, the important theological issues

⁶¹ cf. Brown 1983 p. 150 for details.

⁶² cf. note 59.

⁶³ Brown 1983 p. 151

⁶⁴ Weiss 1991 p. 77

⁶⁵ Grässer 1990 p. 25

⁶⁶ Hegermann 1988 p. 11 (Around 80)

⁶⁷ März 1989 p. 20

⁶⁸ Braun 1984 p.3.

⁶⁹ Rissi 1987 p. 13.

⁷⁰ Among some of the excellent monographs written on particular topics but not mentioned in the text. cf. Loader 1981. Kobelski

McCullough, **Hebrews (2)**, *IBS* 16, June 1994

raised in the Epistle, will have to be dealt with in a later article. Concerning the issues that have been raised, however, while it is true that on some of them, particularly the questions of authorship, date and provenance very little new light has been shed, on others, such as the intellectual background of the author and the genre, structure and purpose of the Epistle, there has been a very profitable debate. However, it is probably for the abundance of exegetical comment that the 80s and early 90s will be remembered. Twenty years ago ministers could perhaps have been forgiven for neglecting Hebrews in the pulpit with the excuse that exegetical resources on Hebrews were few and far between; now, however, that excuse is no longer tenable. In view of the excellent commentaries that have appeared, not to mention the hundreds of exegetical articles on individual verses or themes, preachers must be challenged to turn this abundance of exegetical help and stimulus into their own λόγος τῆς παρακλήσεως for their congregations.

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1981, Hagen 1981, Swetnam 1981, Peterson 1982, Feld 1985, Lehne 1990, Scholer 1991, Dunnill 1992.