Principles of Biblical Hermeneutics

An exploration and assessment of the

hermeneutical techniques and underlying assumptions

displayed by the author of Hebrews in

Hebrews 1. 5-14

by Conrad Vine.

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Course #:   BIST501

Instructor: Dr Aulikki Nahkola

Student name: Mr Conrad Vine

Student #:   2267

Institution: Newbold College

Introduction

Focal theory.

The rise of post-modernism and post-modern hermeneutical approaches[1], if taken to their logical conclusion, could result in the privatization of Biblical interpretation. It is becoming increasingly untenable for anyone to proclaim the[2] ευαγγελιον because such an activity presupposes not only an original intent and purpose within Scripture, but also that there may be common understanding of Scripture, both of which assumptions are untenable within post-modern thought[3].

Purpose of the paper.

Given the rise of post-modernism within the writer's culture, the paper will explore and provide an assessment of the hermeneutical techniques and underlying assumptions displayed by the author[4] in Heb 1. 5-14. The paper's hypothesis is that whilst recognizing that the Author was subject to a range of cultural influences[5], a full understanding of the target pericope will not be possible without an appreciation for the use of Jewish hermeneutical techniques and assumptions within the pericope.

Significance of the paper.

The paper is significant because through understanding the putative use of Jewish hermeneutical techniques and assumptions within the target pericope, the author believes that modern readers may gain a fuller appreciation for the theological message and import of the target pericope. This fuller appreciation, based on an enhanced understanding of the use of Jewish hermeneutical

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[1] Examples of post-modern hermeneutical approaches include, amongst other, deconstructionism, structuralism, reader-response, womanist and feminist criticism.

[2] It would be more amenable within post-modernism to talk of 'an ευαγγελιον' rather than 'the ευαγγλειον'.

[3] 'Thought' is used here in its broadest sense when referring to post-modernism, i.e. milieu, rather than as a noun reflecting measured reflection leading to a reasoned position. A true post-modernist would deny any intrinsic meaning, purpose or common understanding to the word 'thought', so one may use the phrase 'post-modern wretsdfgpou' with equal validity.

[4] The paper will refer to the author of Hebrews henceforth simply as the 'Author'.

[5] If written in the 1st century AD, the Author, whilst ostensibly a literate Jew, may have been familiar with, and even influenced by, thought and processes promoted by Hellenistic Judaism, e.g. as exemplified by Philo, rabbinic Judaism, sectarian Judaism, e.g. Qumran Essenes, and Greek philosophical thought, e.g. Stoicism.

techniques and principles by the Author, will thereby challenge the validity of the post-modern emphasis on the reader to the exclusion of the text and author, showing that consideration of the author and the author's techniques for a given text is necessary for the modern reader in seeking to understand a given text[6].

Method and methodology.

The paper will utilize the following method (the outline of the paper's structure): a) introduction (parameter setting); b) target pericope outline; c) outline of relevant Jewish hermeneutical approaches[7]; d) identification of Jewish hermeneutical techniques used in the target pericope; e) assessment of the Author's underlying hermeneutical assumptions; and f) conclusions. The paper will use the above method because any valid conclusions about the Author's hermeneutical approach requires a systematic comparison of the pericope against specific Jewish hermeneutical techniques and assumptions.

Limitations and delimitations.

The paper will neither engage in a systematic analysis of each such Jewish hermeneutical approach[8], nor assume Pauline authorship for the target pericope[9].

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[6] The target pericope contains OT quotations which to the modern mind seem not only to be taken out of context, but which go against the sense of their original context. This seemingly casual and uncritical use of proof-texts to support a key theological concept, the divinity of Jesus Christ and His superiority to the angels, does not match the modern and historical-critical mind's understanding of responsible exegesis, and could therefore be ignored or dismissed without the understanding that the Author was using hermeneutical techniques that were understood to be valid within his / her time.

[7] Relevant Jewish hermeneutical approaches are defined as those commonly understood to be extant in the time of the early apostolic church, and therefore excludes the later Tannaitic or Talmudic (Mishnah and Gemara) writings.

[8] The paper will however recognize the diversity of hermeneutical approaches within late Second Temple Judaism.

[9] The question of authorship has been debated since the rise of higher critical scholarship, and there still remains no scholarly consensus concerning the question. The traditional view was that Paul was the author, but his view has been challenged by modern scholars on the grounds of literary style, vocabulary, syntax, absence of personal and fervent passages and doxologies, the polished and carefully structured progression of thought, and differences of opinion as to apostolic authorship within the Church from the second to fifth centuries. Although there is support amongst some scholars for Pauline authorship, based on the internal and external attestation and a reasoned rebuttal of the above grounds for non-Pauline authorship, at present there is not a consensus concerning the authorship question within scholarship. The position of this paper is that whilst Pauline authorship is a distinct possibility, the evidence to is too finely balanced to argue for Pauline authorship being a distinct probability, and therefore this paper will assume non-Pauline authorship. This position will remove the necessity to analyse the

The paper will however provide a brief outline of the target pericope, seek to outline contemporary Jewish hermeneutical approaches, and seek to identify the Author's use of contemporary Jewish hermeneutical techniques and his / her underlying assumptions.

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target pericope's hermeneutics from a Pauline hermeneutic perspective. See Nichol, F. (ed.), *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington D.C.; Review and Herald Publishing Association, vol. 7, 1980), pp. 387-94.

Outline of target pericope

Target pericope purpose.

Written as a 'word of exhortation'[10], the Author writes to Jewish Christians who face difficulties in their understanding and faith[11]. The Author seeks to encourage the audience's faith, pointing them from earthly cultic realities to the new soteriological realities, to the nature and scope of the heavenly ministry of Jesus Christ, and the magnificence of Jesus Christ.

The epistle alternates between theological argument and practical application[12] in a concisely worded and carefully reasoned exposition. The Author reasons for the superiority of the Christian faith based on the superiority of Christ Himself, who is superior to the old revelation, to Moses, the angels, Joshua and Melchizedek. Furthermore, Christ is the bringer of a superior covenant, who ministers in a heavenly sanctuary, and who is both a superior priest and a superior sacrifice than provided for by the old order. The epistle concludes with an appeal to faithfulness and Godly living, and above all else, faith in God.

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[10] Heb. 13.22.

[11] There are a number of theories concerning the target audience of the epistle, and Guthrie provides a systematic overview of the main theories, e.g. the epistle was written to Jewish Christians warning against lapses into formal Judaism, to gentile Christians to emphasize the absolute nature of Christianity, or to counteract a new heresy, possibly as found in Colosse or of Gnostic origins. However, the internal evidence strongly suggests that the target audience are Jewish Christians who are very familiar with the OT, and have grown weary and discouraged in their Christian faith, e.g. Heb. 2.1, 2.2, 3.2-14, 10.25, and 12.15-17. See Guthrie, Donald, *New Testament Introduction* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 4th edn., 1990), pp. 688-95.

[12] Different theologians posit differing structures for Hebrews, identifying different structures, progressions of thought, and theological emphases. Johnsson argues that Hebrews is carefully structured to provide a mixture of theological exposition, followed by practical exhortations and application, each of which sections is linked to the following section by an internal prolepsis, e.g. the high-priestly concept is introduced in Heb. 2.17-18, expanded on in 4.15-5.19, and finally developed in 7.1-10.18. The absence of a formal greeting as witnessed in the commonly accepted Pauline corpus, and yet the presence of a personal conclusion, seem to indicate that this epistle was a sermon or theological treatise to persons known to the Author rather than a personal letter sent to address a particular theological or ecclesiological problem faced by the local congregation in question. See Johnsson, William G., *The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier: Hebrews* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1994), pp. 17-26.

Target pericope immediate context.

Heb. 1.5-14 follows the prologue[13] (Heb. 1.1-4) in which the Author enumerates key theological propositions: God is; God spoke; God is speaking; the Creator Son is the full revelation of God; the Son is indeed God, truly God, in essence God, and eternally God[14]; the Son has made purification for sins; and the Son is exalted to the 'right hand of the Majesty on high'.

Whilst this exalted Christology emphasizes the superiority of the revelation through God's Son to all previous revelations, including those delivered through prophets and angels, the focus remains on God, who Himself acts in time and history to reveal Himself and His will. Angels are introduced in v. 4 as counterparts to the prophets in v. 1 (both as mediators of revelations), also serving as an internal prolepsis to the target pericope in which the Son's superiority to the angels is demonstrated, a demonstration which is 'foundational to the thought that Christ's revelation is far superior to that mediated by angels'[15].

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[13] There are differing perspectives on the structure, focus and influence of different external factors on the prologue. Meier (Meier, John P., 'Structure and Theology in Heb.1.1-14', *Biblica* 66 (1985), pp. 170-89) argues for a structure that is concentric, and includes a 'ring structure, a ring that describes the Son from the viewpoint of exaltation as a starting point and exaltation as goal', whereas Lane (Lane, William L., *Word Biblical Commentary Hebrews* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1991), pp. 1-33) argues for a chiastic pattern which describes 'Jesus in an arresting way as the royal Son, divine Wisdom, and the royal Priest' (p.7). The prologue has also been viewed as being based on an early Christian hymn and as coming from a liturgical base, or as providing a polemic against an angelology which posited Christ as the supreme angel, or as arguing against a proto-Colossian heresy, or as being influenced by Hellenistic ideas of Wisdom and the personification thereof, whilst Johnsson argues for a parallelism within the prologue which emphasizes the finality and totality of the revelation of God in the Son's incarnation (see Johnsson, William G., *The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier: Hebrews* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1994), pp. 17-26). In the view of the author, whilst these views are interesting, the main focus of the prologue is the presentation of God who has given a full revelation of Himself through the incarnation of His Son, who Himself is very God.

[14] The use of the present, active participle, masculine, nominative, singular in v. 3, 'being', emphasizes the intrinsic divinity of Christ. He was not created, neither did he become, rather He simply was, is, and will be. The Author is giving an exalted Christology that has echoes of John's Prologue and ultimately of Genesis 1.

[15] Lane, William L., *Word Biblical Commentary Hebrews* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1991), p. 17.

Target pericope.

Linked linguistically to the prologue through the use of 'των αγγελων'[16], the target pericope consists of a catena of seven quotations from the OT, demonstrating from Scripture the superiority of the Son over the angels as expounded in the prologue[17] whilst simultaneously preparing the readers for the solemn appeal of 2.1-4.

The OT texts quoted are as follows[18]:

Hebrews Verse	OT verse	Comments
v. 5a	Ps. 2.7	Identical to the LXX and MT
v. 5b	2 Sam. 7.14	Identical to the LXX and MT
v. 6b	Ps. 97.7 / Deut. 32.43b	Textual difficulties with the MT suggest a pre-MT version or LXX$^{A/B}$ was used
v. 7	Ps. 104.4	v. 7 amends the LXX from πυρ φλεγον to πυροσ φλογα
vv. 8-9	Ps. 45.6-7	vv. 8-9 add και, η, της and change σου to αυτου to the LXX
vv. 10-12	Ps. 102.26-28	vv. 10-12 change 'you will remain' to present tense concerning the Son, and alter word order in v. 10for emphasis.
v. 13	Ps. 110.1	Identical to the LXX and MT

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[16] v. 4 reads '…having become as much superior to των αγγελων...', whilst v. 5 reads 'for to which of των αγγελων did God ever say…'

[17] According to Lane, there is clear parallelism of proposition and supporting Scripture between the prologue and the catena, e.g. v. 2b (appointment of Son as royal heir) with vv. 5-9 (appointment as royal Son and heir), v. 2c (mediator of the creation) with v. 10 (mediator of the creation), v. 3a-b (eternal nature and pre-existent glory) with vv. 11-12 (unchanging, eternal nature), and v. 3c (exaltation to God's right hand) with v. 13 (exaltation to God's right hand). See Lane, William L., *Word Biblical Commentary Hebrews* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1991), p. 22.

[18] Data summarized from Herbert W. Bateman IV (Bateman, Herbert W., IV, *Early Jewish Hermeneutics and Hebrews 1:5-13* (New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 1997) pp. 121-47).

The Author structures the catena[19] with three antithetical comparisons. Firstly, v. 5 – 'to which of the angels did God ever say…' is followed by two quotes to the Son outlining His divine Sonship and one quote to the angels asserting His superiority to the angels[20]. Secondly, v. 7 – 'of the angels He says…' is followed by one quote to the angels emphasizing their created nature, and two quotes to the Son outlining His eternal existence and creatorship[21]. Angels are created, like 'wind' or 'fire', but the Son abides forever. Thirdly, v. 13 – 'But to which of the angels has He ever said…' is followed by a statement to the Son followed by an exegetical comment on Ps. 104.4. The angels go out from God's presence at God's bidding to serve those who are being saved, but the Son remains and reigns at God's right hand.

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[19] It should be noted that there are significant text critical problems related to the above quotations, with debate around which text the Author was using. This debate has suggested that the Author used, *inter alia*, the LXX, earlier rescensions of the LXX (LXX^A or LXX^B or a combination of both), the MT, or a pre-MT Hebrew version. This debate is compounded by the fact that within Judaism there was great attention to detail, the rabbis viewing Scripture as being significant in every word, 'jot' and 'tittle', and the discoveries of the Qumran caves showing that great detail was paid to ensuring the correct transmission of canonical text. Any deviations from the given text would therefore be viewed as being due to errors of transmission or theologically driven. Due to the textual difficulties however, it is difficult to state with certainty whether the Author was using the LXX and therefore that textual differences between the LXX and Hebrews are due to theological embellishment, or whether the Author is simply quoting the LXX from memory and made some errors in his / her regurgitation of the LXX text, or whether the Author is comparing the LXX and the MT and using the LXX where the LXX matches the MT but using a dynamic translation (different from the LXX version) where the MT provides greater flexibility of thought. For further discussion on this issue, see J.C. McCullough (McCullough, J.C., 'The Old Testament Quotations in Hebrews', *New Testament Studies* 26 (1980), pp. 363-79), Joseph A. Fitzmeyer (Fitzmeyer, Joseph A., 'The Use of Explicit Old Testament Quotations in Qumran Literature and the New Testament', *New Testament Studies* 7 (1960-61), pp. 297-333), Murray J. Harris (Harris, Murray J., 'The Translation and Significance of 'ο θεος' in Hebrews 1:8-9', *Tyndale Bulletin* 36 (1985), pp. 129-62), Brooke Foss Westcott (Westcott, B.F., *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1889), pp. 469-95), F.F. Bruce (Bruce, F.F., '"To the Hebrews" or "To the Essenes"', *New Testament Studies* 9 (1962-63), pp. 217-32), Kenneth J. Thomas (Thomas, Kenneth J., 'The Old Testament Citations in Hebrews' *New Testament Studies* 11 (1964-65), pp. 303-25), and George Howard (Howard, George, 'Hebrews and the Old Testament Quotations', *Novum Testamentum* 10 (April-July 1968), pp. 208-16).

[20] The implied answers to the questions presented are that no angel has ever been called 'Son' by God – only Christ has, and that the Son is superior to the angels as they worship Him.

[21] In vv. 7-12 the order of question is first to the angels, and second to the Son, reversing the order of questions in vv. 5-6, where the Son is the object of the first questions, and the angels the recipients of the last question.

The texts are all couched as current and living words from God[22], regardless of their original OT context[23], an intra-Triune God dialogue which the readers are privileged to hear. God's own words[24], as manifest in Scripture, are presented as the final and authoritative testimony to the exaltation of His Son, inviting the readers to thereby accept the Son's pre-existent divinity, creatorship, and exaltation.

With this basic overview of the target pericope in mind, the paper moves on to outline contemporary Jewish hermeneutical approaches which may have influenced the Author of the target pericope.

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[22] The use of the λεγει, present, indicative, active, 3rd person singular indicates that in the Author's mind the words of God presented in the catena, although being quotations from the OT, are still an ongoing reality – God is therefore still speaking and giving definitive and authoritative testimony concerning His Son to the original readers of the epistle, and one must therefore presume to modern readers also.

[23] It should be noted that the Author seems at first examination to the modern mind to use the OT quotations often out of their original context, as the following table outlines:

	OT Context		Hebrews Citation	
OT Verse	Speaker	Object	Speaker	Object
Ps. 2.7	God	The king	God	Son
2 Sam. 7.14	God	David	God	Son
Deut 32.43	Moses	God	God	Son
Ps. 104.4	Psalmist	God	God	Son
Ps. 45.6-7	Psalmist	God	God	Son
Ps. 102.26-28	Psalmist	God	God	Son
Ps. 110.1	God	Priest-king	God	Son

[24] Some scholars argue that the catena is in the form of a scriptural florilegium, noting similarities both with *1 Clement* and *4Qflorilegium* in the Dead Sea Scrolls, with the assumption being that the Author is using a common source that was well know within contemporary Judaism. However, this possibility, although attractive, is mitigated by the clear difference in introductory formulae used across the documents referred to above, and the different conclusions which arise in the documents, particularly between Hebrews and *4Qflorilegium*. See Lane, William L., *Word Biblical Commentary Hebrews* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1991), pp. 23-24.

Contemporary Jewish hermeneutics

The Second Temple period[25] was a time of intensive and extensive interaction with Scriptures within Judaism[26], and an appreciation of the Author's use of Jewish hermeneutical techniques must be understood within the broader context of contemporary Jewish interpretation.

During the Second Temple period, canonical books were written (e.g. Ezra and Nehemiah), pseudepigraphia and the books of the Apocrypha were produced, the Qumran sectaries wrote extensive commentaries and developed the *pesher* genre[27], Philo wrote (allegorical) commentaries with a strong Hellenistic influence, the LXX and its rescensions were produced, there may have been proto-MT Hebrews texts (as witnessed in the Qumran discoveries), Aramaic *targums* were produced for synagogue use, there were extensive rabbinic writings and developments of 'oral Torah'[28] (often in the form of *midrash),* and

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[25] This paper takes as the definition for the Second Temple period as being the period between 'the return from the Babylonian exile and the building of the second temple in 516 BC to its destruction in 70 AD'. See Enns, P., 'Biblical Interpretation, Jewish' in Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (eds.), *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (Leicester, UK: InterVarsity Press, 2000), pp. 159.

[26] The study of Jeremiah by Daniel whilst in captivity, as recorded in Daniel 9, shows that there was serious study of Scripture being conducted even during the captivity, with the purpose of understanding God's word within the current context.

[27] There is debate as to whether *pesher* interpretation is a distinct genre or a sub-genre of Midrash. The position of this paper is that *pesher,* whilst offering some distinctive interpretative principles and approaches, e.g. the eschatological emphasis in interpreting Scripture, use of highly symbolic language, and self-understanding as being inspired interpretations of divine revelations, is still nevertheless part of the *Midrash* genre, being above all else an exegetical commentary on Scripture with a current application.

[28] The 'oral Torah' was believed to the verbal instructions given by God to Moses on Mt. Sinai which provided the authoritative framework within which the 'written Torah' could be interpreted. Whilst the 'written Torah' was fixed and a closed canon, the 'oral Torah' was viewed as being open-ended, with rabbis passing down through the generations the principles and understandings contained within the 'oral Torah', and providing for each generation normative interpretations of the 'written Torah'. Stegner argues that it is interesting to note that whilst the Sadducees rejected the 'oral Torah', the Pharisees accepted the 'oral Torah', and Paul, being by training a Pharisee, would have also accepted the 'oral Torah' concept. In Gal. 1.14, Paul writes that he was 'extremely zealous…for the traditions of the elders'. The Greek used is παραδοσις, a technical term for the 'oral Torah', so we may understand that Paul understood himself to be a member of the scholarly classes who could teach and expound both the 'written' and the 'oral' Torah. See Stegner W. R., 'Jew, Paul the' in Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin and Daniel G. Reid (eds.), *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Leicester, UK: InterVarsity Press, 1993), p. 504.

the earliest writings that were later redacted into the *Talmud* may have been formulated during this period[29].

The sheer scope and breadth of Jewish writings reflect partly the sectarian nature of Second Temple Judaism, the diaspora and rise of influence of rabbis at the expense of the central cultus, Greco-Romano thought, and within these writings there were explicit hermeneutical rules[30], e.g. Hillel's seven hermeneutical principles[31].

Given the breadth of thought and writings which form the Jewish milieu for the Author (see above), a careful approach is required if one is to assess the target pericope within a valid framework. Although there was extensive writing and a lively oral culture, not all of the above mentioned writings are directly relevant to the target pericope.

Philo's writings were heavily influenced by Alexandrian Hellenism, and introduce allegorical hermeneutics to Jewish thought. However, whilst important, and undoubtedly part of the Author's culture, Philo's writings are not a distinct genre of their own, neither do they offer distinctive hermeneutical or exegetical approaches against which the target pericope may be directly evaluated[32].

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[29] The Talmud comprised the *Mishnah* and *Gemara*. The *Mishnah* was a code of Jewish law, and the *Gemara* contained discussions on the Mishnah and the Torah. These were compiled around 200 AD in Palestine and Babylonia, and although redacted at this time, they have their roots in the events of 70 AD and the rise of rabbinic Judaism, and further back to the Pharisaic writings and hermeneutical principles as witnessed in late Second Temple Judaism. See Weitzman, M.P., 'Talmud' in R.J. Coggins and J.L. Houlden (eds.), *The SCM Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (London, UK: SCM Press, 1990), pp. 667-71.

[30] According to Fishbane, the 'Hebrew Bible, not only sponsored a monumental culture of textual exegesis but was itself its own first product'. See Fishbane, Michael, *The Garments of Torah: Essays in Biblical Hermeneutics* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992), p. 4.

[31] Hillel was a famous rabbi who lived c. 60 BC – 20 AD, who is accredited with formalizing seven *middot* or seven hermeneutical rules for exegesis. Hillel was a famous opponent of Shammai, another rabbi, who through their debates provided an exegetical and hermeneutical background to the events of Christ's life. The debates within Judaism, as exemplified by these two rabbis and the disputes between the Sadducees and the Pharisees, are well attested in the Synoptic gospels, e.g. the questions Christ faces on the resurrection.

[32] It should be noted that the influence of Hellenism on Jewish culture was significant, as evidenced by the savage internecine warfare and infighting during the Seleucid and Hasmonean

The *talmudic* writings, although of great value, and having their roots in much the same milieu as the Author, are not directly comparable to the target pericope[33].

Targums were Aramaic translations of the Hebrews Scriptures, and were necessitated by the Persian and Greek dominance in Second Temple times, when many Jews no longer spoke or understood Hebrew. Used primarily in synagogues and schoolhouses, the *Targums* 'mixed metaphrases with paraphrases…used Aramaic cognate terms for translation…clarified metaphors in paraphrases…reflected contextual embellishments in paraphrase…contextually related theological points in a non-conspicuous manner…employed Hillel's exegetical rules'[34]. Although important witnesses for textual criticism, neither *Targums* nor the *targumic* process will be used to evaluate the target pericope because the *Targums* were primarily translations rather than expositional in nature (as is the target pericope).

Pesher commentaries, as developed at Qumran, whilst a sub-genre of *Midrash*[35], are themselves not directly related to the target pericope as they had an eschatological emphasis and sought to directly interpret prophecy within a local and defined context, characteristics which the target pericope does not exhibit.

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periods, when differing factions within Judaism sought to promote integration with, or outright opposition to, Hellenism. Even NT writers were influenced by Greco-Romano thought and approaches, e.g. Paul's epistles are formulated in the standard format of letters of his time, and Paul's speech at Athens (Acts 17.16-34) reflects a deep understanding of contemporary Greek philosophy.

[33] These writings were completed c. 200 AD in Palestine and Babylonia, and reflect the rise in rabbinic Judaism and changes in Jewish thought and cultic practice following the trauma of 70 AD. For further information, see Weitzman, M.P., 'Talmud' in R.J. Coggins and J.L. Houlden (eds.), *The SCM Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (London, UK: SCM Press, 1990), pp. 667-71.

[34] Data summarized from Herbert W. Bateman IV (Bateman, Herbert W., IV, *Early Jewish Hermeneutics and Hebrews 1:5-13* (New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 1997) pp. 117-18).

[35] Gunter Stemberger argues that *Pesher* commentaries are a sub-genre of *Midrash* due to similarities in structure and technique. See Stemberger, Gunter, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (Edinburgh, UK: T&T Clark, 2nd edn., 1996), pp. 235-237.

Midrash, from the verb root *darash*[36]*, '*to study', has come to mean early Jewish exegesis and commentary[37]. Given the breadth of *midrash,* it is difficult to clarify or provide definite definitions, but *midrash* is sometimes described as being either *halakha* (a commentary on the law) or *haggada (*a commentary on the non-legal or narrative components of Scripture), or as being exegetical or homiletic (expounding a text in accordance with the synagogues' liturgical calendar)[38]. Furthermore, *midrash* as a genre may be delineated according to outcome[39], or as a process with distinctive hermeneutical techniques.

Although there is some debate in this area, key *midrashic* hermeneutical techniques included, inter alia, the following[40]: a) selectively choosing and stringing OT texts together; b) thematically linking disparate OT texts; c) selectively stating and then interpreting OT texts; d) editing the OT text at times for theological emphasis; e) quoting named authorities[41]; f) using introductory

[36] Alexander, Philip S., 'Mishnah' in R.J. Coggins and J.L. Houlden (eds.), *The SCM Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (London, UK: SCM Press, 1990), pp. 452-59.

[37] Some scholars argue that the MT itself includes explicit *Midrash,* citing the examples of Deuteronomy reworking sources from Leviticus and Numbers, 1 & 2 Chronicles retelling the stories found in 1 & 2 Kings, later prophets building upon earlier prophets, and the titles given to psalms being commentaries on the contents of the selfsame psalms. See Neusner, J., 'Rabbinic Literature: Midrashim' in Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (eds.), *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (Leicester, UK: InterVarsity Press, 2000), pp. 889-97.

[38] For further information, see Alexander, Philip S., 'Mishnah' in R.J. Coggins and J.L. Houlden (eds.), *The SCM Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (London, UK: SCM Press, 1990), pp. 452-59.

[39] For example, Genesis Rabba is often given as an example of an exegetical *Midrash,* Sifra and Sifrei are examples of *halakhic Midrash,* and Leviticus Rabba is an example of an homiletical *Midrash.*

[40] The following *Midrash* hermeneutical techniques are taken from Alexander, Philip S., 'Mishnah' in R.J. Coggins and J.L. Houlden (eds.), *The SCM Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (London, UK: SCM Press, 1990), pp. 452-59, Data summarized from Herbert W. Bateman IV (Bateman, Herbert W., IV, *Early Jewish Hermeneutics and Hebrews 1:5-13* (New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 1997) pp. 117-18), Silva, M., 'Old Testament in Paul' in Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin and Daniel G. Reid (eds.), *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Leicester, UK: InterVarsity Press, 1993), pp. 630-42, and Stegner W. R., 'Jew, Paul the' in Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin and Daniel G. Reid (eds.), *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Leicester, UK: InterVarsity Press, 1993), p. 503-11. There is not a scholarly consensus about all the hermeneutical techniques used within *midrashic* writings, but the techniques listed do have broad support as being representative of key hermeneutical techniques.

[41] Normally within *Midrash* the authorities quoted would be previous rabbis within the 'oral Torah' tradition, the *darshanim,* those who were within the 'oral Torah' tradition and who would pass on the tradition through their participation in expounding the 'written Torah' through *Midrashim.* See Alexander, Philip S., 'Midrash' in R.J. Coggins and J.L. Houlden (eds.), *The SCM Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (London, UK: SCM Press, 1990), pp. 454-45.

forumulae; g) validating its interpretations with scripture; and h) using Hillel's rules.

As outlined above, the Second Temple period was a time of extensive interaction with Scripture within Judaism, with a number of differing exegetical and hermeneutical approaches being developed and refined. However, not all of the above approaches are directly relevant to the target pericope, whereas there seems to be (on initial examination) some correlation between the target pericope and *midrashic* hermeneutical techniques and principles (as outlined above).

Therefore, given the broad nature and use of *midrashim* within contemporary Judaism, their commonly accepted hermeneutical techniques, their exegetical and homiletical nature, their use in synagogues and teaching schools throughout the diaspora for generations before and after the Author wrote the target pericope, and therefore the likely understanding by the Author's Jewish audience across the disapora of the techniques being used in the target pericope, this paper will now evaluate the target pericope against the framework provided by the above *midrashic* hermeneutical techniques.

Evaluation of target pericope against *midrashic* hermeneutical techniques

Selectively choosing and stringing OT texts together.

The target pericope is a catena, a string of seven OT texts in the form of a *haraz*[42], and is structured within three antithetical comparisons, with αγγελων delineating the pericope as a linguistic inclusio. The general use of such a catena in *midrash* would be as a rhetorical device to move the audience from the opening proposition[43], to the theological conclusion. In our target pericope, the opening proposition is Heb. 1.3b-4, which outlines the exaltation of Christ, and the theological conclusion is Heb. 2.1-4, which starts 'δια τουτο' and includes a strong warning not to ignore the revelation in Christ.

Thematically linking disparate OT texts.

The more ostensibly unrelated the texts used in a *midrashic* catena were, the greater the rhetorical impact gained if a clear thematic link could be shown through the catena. In the target pericope, the Author constructs a thematic chiasm as follows, based on the original contexts of the OT verses used[44]:

> A The Son's status as Davidic King (1.5)
>> B The Son's status as God (1.6-7)
>>> C The Son's status as Divine Davidic King (1.8-9)
>> B The Son's status as God (1.10-12)
> A The Son's status as Davidic King (1.13)

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[42] This is a 'string of pearls', a rabbinic technique used in *midrashic* interpretation.

[43] The opening verse or theological proposition was known as the *Petihah*.

[44] See Bateman, Herbert W., IV, *Early Jewish Hermeneutics and Hebrews 1:5-13* (New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 1997) pp. 204-05. The more seemingly unrelated the catena texts were, the greater the argument when a theme is shown for the overall unity of Scripture. The following (author's own) table outlines the OT contexts of the verses used:

Hebrews Verse	OT Verse	Context
1.5a	Ps. 2.7	God is speaking to the Davidic King at his enthronement
1.5b	2 Sam. 7.14	God is promising David to establish a Davidic monarchy
1.6	Deut. 32.43	Moses is praising God and extolling His works
1.7	Ps. 104.4	Psalmist is praising the creator God
1. 8-9	Ps. 45.6-7	Psalmist praises the divine God-King at His wedding
1.10-12	Ps. 102.26-28	Psalmist is praising the creator God
1.13	Ps. 110.1	God assures the divine Priest-King of ultimate victory

The catena therefore has a clear theme running through it, that of the identification of the Son progressively as King, as God, and as Divine King[45].

Selectively stating and then interpreting OT texts.

A common *midrashic* format was to provide a lemma from Scripture, e.g. a single text, and then provide exegetical or homiletical comment[46]. The target pericope is used to provide Scriptural support for the prologue, which although not providing a direct OT lemma, includes in v. 2b[47] an allusion to Ps. 2.8[48], and in v. 3c[49] an allusion to Ps. 110.1[50]. Both prologue allusions about the Son come from a 'coronation psalm celebrating the enthronement of a royal figure'[51], with additional material from both enthronement psalms explicitly used within the supporting catena.

Editing the OT text at times for theological emphasis.

A direct comparison of the target pericope and the LXX shows a number of amendments, which may be argued to provided theological emphasis by the Author[52]. However appealing this may be, since the Qumran discoveries it is becomingly increasingly difficult to state with confidence that the Author was using the LXX, an earlier LXX rescension (e.g. LXX$^{A/B}$), a pre-MT Hebrew version, or simply quoting from memory and subject to unintentional

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[45] See Footnote # 16, where according to Lane, there is further clear parallelism of proposition and supporting Scripture between the prologue and the catena.

[46] According to Alexander, the use of such a technique allows for a polyvalent exegesis, whereas the Qumran *Pesher* approach requires a monovalent exegesis. The *Midrashic* technique therefore allows for greater flexibility in the interpretation of a given lemma, and supports a more explicit exegetical development of thought through the use of a catena of texts.

[47] '…whom he appointed heir of all things…'

[48] Ps. 2.8 reads, 'Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession'.

[49] '…he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high…'

[50] Ps. 110.1 reads, 'The Lord says to my Lord, "sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool"'.

[51] Lane, William L., *Word Biblical Commentary Hebrews* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1991), p. 6.

[52] Bateman argues that there is clear editing for theological purposes in the changes (from the LXX text) from σου to αυτου in 1.8, emphasizing that '…the Kingdom belongs to the Son…', from διαμενεις (you will remain) to διαμενεις (you remain) and from αλλαξεις αυτους (you will change them) to ελιξεις αυτους (you will roll them up) in 1.11-12a, the change emphasizing the 'transitory character of the creation with the Son. The Son remains the same. He is immutable…', and the additions of the two articles η (the) and της (of the) drawing 'attention to the Son's rule. The added articles clearly identify the quality of his rule: it is one of righteousness'. See Bateman, Herbert W., IV, *Early Jewish Hermeneutics and Hebrews 1:5-13* (New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 1997) pp. 141-46.

mistakes[53], so given the current state of textual criticism, no firm conclusion can be drawn for this particular criterion[54].

Quoting named authorities.

It was common to quote authoritative figures, e.g. well known teachers respected within the 'oral Torah' tradition, to provide authoritative support for one's *midrashic* exegesis[55] or commentary[56]. In the target pericope, the Author represents all the OT texts as being God's own words, drawing upon the basic *midrashic* principle of Scripture being divine speech[57], regardless of the original contexts[58]. Not only do the texts support the prologue's propositions, but they are presented as the living word of the living God, commanding divine authority and precluding further debate.

Using introductory forumulae.

Within Pauline writings, there are common introductory formulae, e.g. the use of $\kappa\alpha\theta\omega\varsigma$ $\gamma\epsilon\gamma\rho\alpha\pi\pi\tau\alpha\iota$, in the Qumran writings there are standard introductory formulae[59], and in *midrashic* writings texts were often introduced by standard

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[53] The Author may have made unintentional changes or intentional changes from his / her source text. Unintentional changes may have included problems from memory, metastasis, not recognizing dittography, homeiteiluton, wrong word division in uncial MSS, homoarchuton, unclear abbreviations, mistakes from hearing such as mixing diphthongs, replacing words with synonyms, or replacing with more up to date spelling or vocabulary. An intentional change may have been for theological purposes, for simplification of an archaic term or concept, for contamination purposes, for harmonizing differing accounts, or to provide a gloss.

[54] See Footnote # 18 for a further discussion of the text critical problems associated with comparisons between the text of Hebrews and the LXX and MT.

[55] Such an approach allowed a given exposition to incorporate divergent theological developments within a commonly understood authoritative framework.

[56] Matt. 7.29-29 states that 'now when Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one with authority, and not as their scribes'. Jesus' own teaching, as well as being radical in content, was radical in format, not basing its authority on claims to respected teachers within the 'oral Torah' tradition, but being authoritative *ipso facto*.

[57] See below for a further discussion on the basic *midrashic* hermeneutical principle of Scripture being viewed as divine speech. This principle, along with others, provided the framework of understanding within which the above individual hermeneutical techniques were used.

[58] See Footnote # 21 above for a fuller outline of the OT contexts for each of the texts used in the catena within the target pericope.

[59] Bateman argues for the use of standard introductory forumulae in the Qumran texts, particularly in *Midrashic* scrolls such as *4Qflorilgeium (see* Bateman, Herbert W., IV, *Early Jewish Hermeneutics and Hebrews 1:5-13* (New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 1997) pp. 153-55).

formulae such as 'she-ne'emar' ('as it is said')[60]. In the target pericope, the Author uses present, aorist and perfect variants of λεγω, with God as the subject each time, which whilst being a standard *midrashic* technique, within the context emphasizes by its simplicity and lack of elaboration the fact that it is God who speaks, and not a mere authoritative teacher within the 'oral Torah' tradition.

Validating its interpretations with scripture.

A common *midrashic* technique was the use of proof texts to support a given interpretation or theological proposition[61]. This technique was viewed not only as permissible for individual teachers operating within the 'oral Torah', but as necessary to ensure a dynamic and relevant interpretation of the fixed 'written Torah'. In the target pericope, the entire catena (essentially a list of thematically linked proof texts) is presented as a Scriptural validation for the propositions and scriptural allusions within the prologue. Furthermore, v. 14 is offered as validation for the final text of the catena (v. 13), itself being an exegetical comment on Ps. 104.4, quoted in v. 7 of the catena[62].

Using Hillel's rules.

Hillel's rules were an attempt to explicitly formulate hermeneutical techniques, and were used with other lists of rules in *midrashic* writings[63]. Whilst there is some concern amongst modern scholars concerning their actual use and efficacy[64], within the target pericope there is some evidence of the use of these

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[60] See Alexander, Philip S., 'Midrash' in R.J. Coggins and J.L. Houlden (eds.), *The SCM Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (London, UK: SCM Press, 1990), pp. 456.

[61] This may not sit easily with modern critical scholars, who may dismissively regard *Midrash* as eisegesis and not exegesis.

[62] Lane argues here not only that v. 14 should be understood as an 'exegetical comment' on v. 7, but that the 'structure of the question in v. 14 is designed to call the hearers to decision. It demands an affirmative answer', i.e. the hearers are to recognize the superiority of the Son over the angels. See Lane, William L., *Word Biblical Commentary Hebrews* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1991), p. 32.

[63] Hillel's rules included 7 general principles (Hillel is believed to have lived c. 60 BC – 20 AD), and these rules were then expanded into the thirteen rules of Ishmael (believed to have been formulated between 110-130 AD). This paper is not the place for an extended discussion on the merits / demerits and use of such rules.

[64] According to Alexander, the various lists of rules are 'unsatisfactory' as they are often 'obscure', 'prescriptive as well as descriptive', and 'hard to substantiate from the actual

rules[65], e.g. the linking of Ps. 2.7 and 2 Sam. 7.14 through the common term 'son' is an example of *gezerah shavah*[66], the thrice use of αγγελος (in different forms) in vv. 6-7 may be an example of *binyan av mi-shenei khetuvim*[67], and the use of Ps. 110.1a in v. 13 may be an example of *kayose bo hemaqom aher*[68]. Therefore, whilst allowing for the scepticism of modern scholars concerning the use and internal logic of 'Hillel's rules', there is some evidence within the target pericope of at least an implicit recognition and use of Hillel's rules[69].

The above admittedly brief evaluation of target pericope against *midrashic* hermeneutical techniques has shown that with the exception of the criterion of 'editing the OT text at times for theological emphasis' (due primarily to textual uncertainties), there is evidence across a number of internal criteria of the use of *midrashic* hermeneutical techniques within the target pericope. Within this context, the paper now turns to a brief exploration of the Author's hermeneutical assumptions.

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midrashim' (see Alexander, Philip S., 'Mishnah' in R.J. Coggins and J.L. Houlden (eds.), *The SCM Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (London, UK: SCM Press, 1990), pp. 458.

[65] According to Bateman in Bateman, Herbert W., IV, *Early Jewish Hermeneutics and Hebrews 1:5-13* (New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 1997) pp. 207-46, there are clearly identifiable uses of Hillel's rules within the target pericope.

[66] According to Bateman, this rule stated that if there is 'verbal analogy from one verse to another; where the same words are applied to two separate cases, it follows that the same considerations apply to both'. Therefore, as both OT texts quoted in the catena have references to a 'son', the Author is bringing these two texts together with their verbal analogy so that the exegetical conclusions drawn from each verse may apply to the other, i.e. the Son is identified both as the true Davidic king of promise, and as David's greater son, with both texts being fulfilled in the Son, Jesus Christ. See Bateman, Herbert W., IV, *Early Jewish Hermeneutics and Hebrews 1:5-13* (New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 1997) pp. 220.

[67] According to Bateman, this rule stated that 'building up a family from a single text; when the same phrase is found in a number of passages, then a consideration found in one of them applies in them all', which in the context of this pericope means that we should understand the OT texts together through their use of the common term αγγελος to suggest the Son's possession or ownership of the angels. See Bateman, Herbert W., IV, *Early Jewish Hermeneutics and Hebrews 1:5-13* (New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 1997) pp. 226.

[68] According to Bateman, this rule stated that 'as is found in another place; a difficulty in one text may be solved by comparing it with another which has points of general (though not necessarily verbal) similarity', which in the context of this pericope means that whilst v. 13 quotes from Ps. 110.1a, we may see in Ps. 110.1b a fuller exposition of the basic point of the Son's divinity and exaltation, an fuller exposition which mirrors the allusions to Ps. 110.1 in the prologue.

[69] This conclusion of the evidence of the use of Hillel's rules within the target pericope may be the result of asking whether one can see a specific rule, and in the act of seeking one finds. However, the Author was writing within a milieu in which such rules were commonly understood amongst the literate and educated classes, were the subject of contemporary debate and discussion, and so in the absence of any evidence to the contrary one must assume that there is at least an implicit if not explicit use of, or recognition of, Hillel's rules by the Author.

The Author's hermeneutical assumptions

Within *midrash,* there were two fundamental hermeneutical principles within which all hermeneutical activity took place: Scripture as divine speech; and the doctrine of the 'oral Torah'. As divine speech, Scripture originated in God's mind and was transmitted through the prophets[70], with the 'oral Torah' providing the authoritative framework within which the 'written Torah' could be interpreted[71].

The Author consistently and explicitly portrays Scripture as divine speech, both within the target pericope and the prologue: v. 1, 'λαλησας'; v. 2, 'ελαλησεν'; v. 5, 'ειπεν'; v. 6, 'λεγει'; v. 7, 'λεγει'; v. 13, 'ειρηκεν'[72]. However, no *midrashic* reference is made to written Scripture or respected teachers, debates about whether written statements are dead or alive[73] or the exact interpretation or wording of written Scripture are avoided, with the Author making no reference to the concept of 'fulfilment'[74]. Neither is opportunity given for evasion of response through lexical, grammatical, syntactical, rabbinic, allegorical or metaphorical dispute.

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[70] According to Alexander, there were a number of axioms associated with the principle of Scripture being divine speech: firstly, 'Scripture is polyvalent: it is an inexhaustible fountain of truth'; secondly, 'Scripture is a totally coherent and self-consistent body of truth', despite seeming and surface contradictions; and thirdly, that 'Scripture is inerrant: it can contain no errors of fact'; and fourthly, 'there is no redundancy in Scripture…everything in Scripture, even the spelling of the words as full or defective, or the shape of the letters, is seen as significant'. See Alexander, Philip S., 'Mishnah' in R.J. Coggins and J.L. Houlden (eds.), *The SCM Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (London, UK: SCM Press, 1990), pp. 457-58.

[71] According to Alexander, there were a number of principles associated with the doctrine of 'oral Torah': firstly, that the 'written Torah' is a 'closed, canonic text, fixed and inviolable', secondly, that 'the oral Torah is open-ended, ever developing. It is able to demonstrate the relevance of the 'written Torah' in changing historical circumstances'; and thirdly, that 'the oral Torah' imposes limits on the interpretation. The *darshan* does not stand before the text of Scripture with absolute freedom'. See Alexander, Philip S., 'Mishnah' in R.J. Coggins and J.L. Houlden (eds.), *The SCM Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (London, UK: SCM Press, 1990), pp. 458.

[72] For verses 1 and 2, the Author uses the contract verb λαλεω, whilst for the remaining instances he / she uses the ω verb λεγω. According to Westcott, there is no such mode of quotation anywhere else in the NT, with other writers combining the words 'said' or 'says' with the name of a prophet or book. In this pericope we are faced with a unique use of introductory formula which emphasizes through its simplicity the fact that it is God who is speaking.

[73] For instance, see 2 Cor. 3.16-17 for further information on the debate between what was alive or dead, and whether the written law brought death and the Spirit brought life. Furthermore,

[74] Matthew is a classic example of the use of Scripture to show that Christ was the fulfillment of the OT, e.g. Matt. 1.22-23, 2.15, 17-18 and 23.

Rather, God has spoken, what He has said has ongoing significance[75], and He is still speaking. 'Generally it must be observed that no difference is made between the word spoken and the word written. For us and all ages the record is the voice of God'[76].

Furthermore, the Author presents Scripture as a dialogue both within the Triune God and between God and mankind[77]. Within the Triune God, the entire target pericope is presented as God the Father speaking to God the Son. Elsewhere, the Son 'intercedes' with the Father on our behalf[78], He prays 'to the one who was able to save Him from death'[79], and His blood 'speaks a better word'[80].

The Holy Spirit does speak, but He speaks to mankind in 3.7-11, 9.8, and 10.15-16, 'however, God and the Son do not speak to the Spirit, and the Spirit does not speak to them, but only of God'[81]. There is also dialogue between God and mankind, with God speaking 'in many and various ways'[82], Moses speaks to God[83], as may we[84], and as Christ is our intercessor, our dialogue with God becomes Christ's words, hence all dialogue may be understood as being God's word.

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[75] The use of the 3rd person perfect indicative active in v. 13, 'ειρηκεν' implies an ongoing significance from what God said in the quoted text, i.e. God spoke to the Son and told Him to sit 'at my right hand', and therefore there is an ongoing significance of this statement, i.e. the Son's exaltation is an ongoing reality and not just an historical reality.

[76] Westcott, Brooke Foss, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (London, UK: Macmillan and Co., 1889), p. 475.

[77] God is a God of constant communication according to the Author, both within the Trinity, and between God and mankind, a communication that includes dialogue from God and mankind, all of which is sanctified through the intercessory ministry of Jesus Christ.

[78] Heb. 7.25, 'Consequently he is able for all time to save those who approach God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them'.

[79] Heb. 8.7, 'In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission'.

[80] Heb. 12.24, '…and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel'.

[81] Barth, Markus, 'The Old Testament in Hebrews' in William Klassen and Graydon F. Snyder (eds.), *Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation* (London, UK: SCM Press Ltd., 1962), p. 62.

[82] Heb. 1.1, 'Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets'.

[83] Heb. 12.21, 'Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear"'.

[84] Heb. 13. 6, 'So we can say with confidence, "the Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?"'.

For the Author therefore, to read or hear Scripture is *ipso facto* a participation in a dialogue with God, a sanctified dialogue that calls for an immediate response 'today'[85], a response unlike those forefathers who heard without faith, a response of faith to the 'good news' in Christ[86].

The 'oral Torah' hermeneutical principle reflected the desire of Jewish exegesis to 'understand themselves in light of Scripture, and conversely to understand Scripture in such a way to bring meaning to their situation'[87]. There was a strong but disputed tradition[88] that 'interpretation is comprehensible only through the authoritative tradition of interpretation'[89], with the authoritative tradition believed to have originated at Mt. Sinai.

The Author implicitly accepts the 'oral Torah' doctrine in the prologue, the structural parallelism of which however contains a significant hermeneutical development[90]:

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[85] The Author uses the word 'today' in 2. 7, 13, 15, and 3. 7 to emphasize the need for the readers to accept the full 'good news' in Christ, and not to prevaricate or refuse outright the 'good news', as such an attitude will prevent the readers entering into rest that God has promised.

[86] See Heb. 4. 1-2, where the Author contrasts the example of the Israelites' refusal to accept the 'good news' after their Exodus from Egypt, leading to their failure to enter into the 'Sabbath rest' that God had planned for them, with the call to the present readers to respond in faith 'today' to the 'good news' that has become manifest in Jesus Christ.

[87] See Enns, P., 'Biblical Interpretation, Jewish' in Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (eds.), *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (Leicester, UK: InterVarsity Press, 2000), pp. 162.

[88] For instance, the Sadducees rejected the concept of 'oral Torah' as they held that only the 'written Torah' was applicable, whereas the Pharisees not only accepted the concept of 'oral Torah', but were the main proponents of the concept in late Second Temple Judaism. Paul was a proponent of the 'oral Torah' during his pre-conversion days, one who presumed to 'sit in the seat of Moses'. The concept however was disputed within Judaism, and Stemberger puts the basic question thus, 'does this term entail a statement about the manner of transmission – viz., not in written form but by oral tradition? Or is it merely intended as a distinction over against the Bible, or a suggestion that one Torah was given at Sinai in written and the other in oral form?'. The debate went on in Judaism through the middle ages and into the modern era, with still no firm resolution. However, the doctrine of 'oral Torah' is a natural development from the concept of closed revelation, the 'written Torah', which is in need of interpretation for new situations over time. See Stemberger, Gunter, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (Edinburgh, UK: T&T Clark, 2nd edn., 1996), pp. 31-42.

[89] See Fishbane, Michael, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 2.

[90] See Johnsson, William G., *The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier: Hebrews* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1994), p. 42.

Verse 1.	Verse 2.
'Long ago'	'in these last days'
'God spoke'	'He has spoken'
'to our ancestors'	'to us'
'through the prophets'	'by a Son'
'in many and various places'	?

The Author's incomplete structural parallelism highlights a simple notion – the revelation by God to us in His son is a full revelation – there is no longer the need for God to speak 'in many and various places'. The 'oral Torah' may have provided the authoritative framework for interpretation until now, but now, 'in these last days', there is a new and complete revelation from God – the Christ event, and it is the full revelation of God in Jesus Christ that now provides the authoritative framework within which all Scripture are to be interpreted[91].

The Author thereby develops a *midrashic* hermeneutical principle into the basic hermeneutical principle of the apostolic church[92] and of Christ Himself – that Scripture itself can only be understood within the framework of the Christ event[93].

Furthermore, the Author knows that Christ has come[94], but the question he / she asks is, 'who is Jesus Christ?[95]' Who exactly is He who has come, and what

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[91] According to Westcott, for the Author, 'Israel in its history, in its ritual, in its ideal, is a unique enigma among the peoples of the world, of which the Christ is the complete solution'. See Westcott, B.F., *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1889), p. 491.

[92] The basic hermeneutical principle that Scripture can only be understood through the lens of the Christ event was fundamental to the proclamation of the apostolic church in the *kerygma.*

[93] The NT provides a Christological interpretative framework for the OT, e.g. Jesus is recorded as stating in Luke 25.44 that, 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled'. Further evidence is clearly seen inter alia in Peter's speech at Pentecost (Acts 2.14-36), Peter's speech to the Sanhedrin (Acts 3.17-18), Peter's defence to the 'Council' (Acts 4. 11), Stephen's speech to the Sanhedrin (Acts 7), and in Philip's exposition to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8. 26-40).

[94] Heb. 2. 3a-4 states that, '…it was declared at first through the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him, while God added his testimony by signs and wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, distributed according to His will'.

[95] A common theological question today is 'what is x, y or z', e.g. what is the Bible's teaching on ecclesiology?, whereas for the Author, the basic theological question and task is to understand 'who is Jesus Christ?'. The Author is here asking the same question that would

does He mean? The target pericope provides in *midrashic* form Scriptural support for the Author's propositions about the Son in the prologue, because for the Author, 'exegesis is the endeavour to help people in need by telling them what the Bible says of their shepherd Jesus Christ'[96].

There is therefore a twin focus to the development of the 'oral Torah' hermeneutical principle by the Author: firstly, the full revelation of God in Jesus Christ supersedes the previous revelations, providing the authoritative framework for all interpretation of Scripture[97]; and secondly, Jesus Christ Himself is the focus of the Hebrew Scriptures, He is that of which they all speak and point forward to.

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become the focus for theological debate for the following four centuries in Church councils – the nature of Christ and His co-existent divinity and humanity.

[96] See Barth, Markus, 'The Old Testament in Hebrews' in William Klassen and Graydon F. Snyder (eds.), *Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation* (London, UK: SCM Press Ltd., 1962), p. 58.

[97] It is interesting to note that the concept of the authoritative framework for the interpretation of Scripture being found in Christ was not only accepted by the Author, but in Irenaeus' writings concerning the expanded canon of Scripture (OT and NT) at the end of the second century. The Church came before the NT writings, treasuring oral accounts of the life and death and resurrection of Christ, the Church was the environment in which the NT writings were produced, and it was the Church which decided which writings were canonical and which were to be excluded. According to Irenaeus, the choice of inclusion within the NT canon was determined by the Church using the 'rule of faith'. 'The standard is the rule of faith as preserved in churches in the apostolic succession', see Grant, Robert and Tracy, David, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 2nd edn., 1984), p. 50. The Church retained the Hebrew Scriptures for a theological purpose, believing that the Scriptures pointed to Jesus Christ, and for Irenaeus, canonicity is driven by the framework of Scripture and the rule of faith, which for him is 'a summary of the faith that is not totally fixed verbally but that is recognizable as an ancestor of later Christian creeds' (see James L. Kugel and Rowan A. Greer (eds.), *Early Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1986), p. 124). There is therefore a line of continuity from the basic *midrashic* hermeneutical principle of 'oral Torah' through the Author's hermeneutical presentation of Jesus Chris as the new authoritative framework within which the Hebrew Scriptures were to be interpreted to the Church's hermeneutical criteria which were used to evaluate whether apostolic or other writings were to be included within the new expanded canon.

Conclusion

Given the purpose of the paper[98], the paper's hypothesis is that '…a full understanding of the target pericope will not be possible without an appreciation for the use of Jewish hermeneutical techniques and assumptions within the pericope'.

The target pericope consists of a catena of OT texts which provide the Scriptural support for the prologue's theological propositions, and the exegetical development of thought leading to the solemn warning of Heb. 2.1-4. The pericope presents an intra-Triune God dialogue, and demonstrate from Scripture the Son's divine kingship, creatorship and exaltation.

Within the Author's Jewish milieu were a number of hermeneutical approaches, e.g. Greco-Romano philosophy, Philo's allegoricalism, *pesher, targumic* and *talmudic* writings, but the target pericope displays evidence of a systematic use of *midrashic* hermeneutical techniques, even whilst it is not a *midrash* per se.

Furthermore, the Author has further developed the underlying *midrashic* hermeneutical principles of Scripture as divine speech and the 'oral Torah' doctrine within the hermeneutical context of the apostolic teachings and the early church's 'rule of faith': Scripture is a dialogue between God and mankind, and participation therein requires a response of faith in Jesus Christ; and the Christ event is not only the key to understanding Scripture, but is the complete authoritative framework within which Scripture is to be interpreted.

Notwithstanding post-modernism's focus on the reader, an appreciation of the Author's use and development of Jewish hermeneutical techniques and principles is therefore absolutely necessary if one is to understand the simultaneous discontinuity from cultic Judaism and continuity with the Hebrew

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[98] '…the paper will seek to explore and provide an assessment of the hermeneutical techniques and underlying assumptions displayed by the author of Hebrews in Heb 1. 5-14'.

Scriptures found in Hebrews, the key to which may only be found in the Son, very God, very man, Creator, and Divine Davidic King.

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