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PHILO OF ALEXANDRIA AND THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS ON THE CONCEPT OF THE SPIRITUALIZATION OF THE CULT

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ABSTRACT: The Epistle to the Hebrews contains one of the most unique Greek lexicology and syntax of all the New Testament writings. Behind syntax, however, there lies a very profound theological vision on topics such as Christ, Temple, holiness, perseverance and salvation. Studying Hebrews against the background of Graeco-Roman culture, the source that most contemporary scholars mention as being closest to the world of Hebrews in this context is Philo of Alexandria. Not only on philological grounds, but also in matters of methods of interpreting the Old Testament cult and in theology, Hebrews and Philo share a very common background. Analyzing the Epistle to the Hebrews comparatively, we are bound to ask whether or not comparsions such as these are warranted. In the following study we will state the state of the problem and then will examine the two sources that seem to have served as a source of inspiration for the author of Hebrews: the Old Testament and Philo of Alexandria. We will focus exclusively on the issues of the method of allegory and the spiritualization/reinterpretation of Old Testament cultic entities, since both Philo and Hebrews are characterized by these concerns. In essence, we will want to know who or what served as the most plausible source of inspiration for the author of Hebrews in the particular area of the reinterpretation of the Old Testament cult.

Key words: Hebrews, Philo, Old Testament, cult, spiritualization, allegory

Introduction: The state of the problem and the background to the Epistle to the Hebrews

The title *The Epistle to the Hebrews* has been associated with one of the more controversial debates in the area of the New Testament. It cleary points, on the one hand, to an audience that must have shared in the Jewish culture of the first century church. This assumption makes sense in light of the emphasis that the author laid on Old Testament characters (Abraham and Moses), institutions (Temple ritual and priesthood)

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and theological concerns, the most important of which is the 'forgiveness of sins.'

On the other hand, perhaps unlike any other writing in the New Testament, Hebrews contains some of the most Platonic and allegorical features that one can find in the entire Bible. The difference between outward and inward purification from sin, the notion of cleansing the conscience and the superiority of the spiritual equivalents over their earthly incarnation (9:14; 10:22) – these are some of the conceptual innovations that make the Letter to the Hebrews a unique document.

It is then not surprising that the majority of commentators have pointed out the similarities between the worldview of Hebrews and that of Platonic, Intermediate Platonic and Gnostic Thought, (Sterling 2001: 210). In Hebrews one can hear the echoes of both Jewish and Hellenistic preaching. While we can surmise that the audience of Hebrews knew the Temple in Jerusalem was fully operational and regarded it as vital for their faith experience, we feel the uneasiness of the author with the efficacy of Mosaic enactments. That is why, given his vision, the richness of the vocabulary and the rhetorical complexities that he employed, a number of scholars have identified first century Alexandria as the most natural environment in which such an author was educated (Lane 1991:1; Bruce 1990: 12; Ellingworth, 1993: 28). According to Siegert, however, it is possible that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews was a Jewish Christian from Rome who may have met Philo there (Siegert 2009: 175-209).

In order to reevaluate the topic of the spiritualization of the cult in Hebrews and Philo, we will deal with this phenomenon as it appears in Philo, in the Old Testament, in the New Testament and then in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

The process of spiritualizing the cult in Philo of Alexandria

That Philo applied the method of allegory when interpreting the laws of Moses has been recognized as one of the hallmarks of his hermeneutics. To understand better this phenomenon, we list here a sample of the texts which show the transition from the cultic entities of the Law to the spiritual/rational/psychological significance that one may obtain through the method of allegorization.

The reinterpretation/spiritualization of the physical cult

OT Cultic entities	The spiritual/rational/psychological significance attained through the method of allegory	Textual reference
Tabernacle and altar	Ideas (ἰδέας) and rational spirit (πνεῦμα λογικὸν)	*Ebr.* 134 *Spec.* 1.273-7
The sanctuary	Mental (νοητὸς), invisible order	*Rer.* 75; *QE* 2.51, 83

Holy of holies in Temple	Realm of the mind (νοητός)	*Mos.* 2.81
Temple	The human soul (ψυχη)	*Spec.* 1. 12, 66ff.; *Cher.* 29, 99-100;
Offering incense	Offering the whole mind (ὅλον τὸν νοῦν)	*Leg.* 2.56; *QE* 2.71
Whole burnt offering	The perfect disposition (διάθεσιν) a man seeks to attain	*Spec.* 1.253
Body parts of priestly offerings	Inward virtues, reason	*Spec.* 1.145-50; 1.206-08, 216
High priest as mediator	the λόγος	*Mig.* 102; *Som.* 1.215;
Sacrificing perfect victim	Purification of the soul (ψυχή) from passion	*Spec.* 1.259-60
Worship through sacrifice	A soul (ψυχή) bringing simple reality as its only sacrifice	*Det.* 21
Passover	Purification of soul (ψυχῆς κάθαρσιν)	*Spec.* 2.147
Special festivals	Life of the soul (ψυχή), thoughts (λογίσμοι), and virtues	*Spec.* 2.42
Circumcision	Excision of pleasures which bewitch the mind (διάνοια), the malady of conceit	*Spec.* 1.6, 8ff., 305; 3.46ff.; *QG* 3.46; *QE* 2.2
Sacrificing the sheep	Purging the mind (διανοίας)	*Mut.* 245-57
Clean beasts and birds	The senses and the mind (νοῦς λογισμοί)	*QG* 2.52
Pouring libation of blood	The blood of the soul (τὸ ψυχικόν αἷμα)	*Leg.* 2.56; *QE* 2.14

As is evident, Philo interpreted the Levitical system of the Temple by employing the method of allegory. He acknowledged the historical reality and the usefulness of the Mosaic system, and yet sought the 'higher significance' of its elements. More important, however, is the question about the sources that influenced his method. To answer this question we will examine several possible streams of influence to Philon's thought, namely, the Greek and Hellenistic, the Qumranic, and the Rabbinic sources.

1. The Greek and Hellenistic background to Philo

To understand the worldview of Philo and of Hellenistic Judaism better, we must remember that the process of reevaluating the material cult to the point of finding

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in it higher spiritual, moral or rational meanings, started much earlier in Palestine, and in the Greek world for that matter. In a sense, it is natural that with the passing of time worshipers of a given religion will question or reevaluate from within the basic assumptions of that religious system. Both Judaism and the Greek religion had to deal with this challenge. As we will argue shortly, the premises on which Judaism started and the methodology it applied in this process differed radically from Greek religion.

In one of our earlier studies and noted that „cult criticism' essentially involved two basic responses: *criticizing* the cult – at times to the point of rejecting its usefulness – and *reinterpreting* the cult, focusing on its spiritual and/or metaphysical significance. In the case of ancient Greek religion (thus centuries before Philo), we noted that one of the reasons for the rise of „allegory' as a critical tool for Greek philosophers was their dissatisfaction with the Homeric worldview of the gods (Reale 1987: 78-81). Xenophanes, the Eleatic school, and subsequent efforts on the part of the sophists – all these reacted against the „anthropomorphistic' manner in which Homer portrayed the violent, promiscuous, and deceiving gods of the Greek tradition (Botica 2011: 251ff.; Pulleyn 1997: 196ff.; Burkert 1987: 305-306; Tate 1934: 105-106).

Evidently other factors beyond the anthropomorphistic vision of Homer were at play. As Burkert argued, in seeking to base their systems on a „rational' explanation of nature, the first '*sophoi* or *sophistai*' „drew conclusions from the study of natural philosophy (the topic of '*ta onta*') that indirectly collided with the traditional understanding of the divine world (Botica 2011: 252; Burkert 1987: 306). In time, the critical attitude against the cult took on various forms, from the 'theological' argument that the gods need no sacrifices, to the 'philosophical' concern that the gods may not be bribed by sacrifices (Young 1972: 279ff.; Nordern 1913: 38ff.).

Nevertheless, in Greece cult criticism did not radically affect the fundamental beliefs and practices of traditional religion. Even critical philosophers such as Socrates and Epicurus would not repudiate the cult per se (Fergusson 1970: 196; Wenschkewitz 132: 51ff.). And the majority of the populace continued to fulfill the obligations that Greek religion demanded of them, even during the heyday of Stoicism, Epicureanism and Skepticism. In time, however, under the impact of historical, sociological and cultural (philosophical and religious) factors, Greek traditional religion gradually made room for more transcendent aspirations of some of its worshipers, especially those who had access to philosophical and gnostic sources. The „reinterpretation' and/or „spiritualization' of the cult must be understood in the context of the inability of traditional religion to accommodate satisfactorily the quest for spiritual intimacy on the part of the worshiper. Nevertheless, the material cult continued to play an essential role in the life of the Graeco-Roman worshiper. After all, it was only during

the reign of Constantine that the practices of offering sacrifices to the gods were abolished.

Returning to our discussion of Philo, it must be acknowledged that he never sought 'allegorical' meanings in the laws of Moses because he considered the laws inadequate for his time. He did not repudiate the laws, even though during his lifetime the Jews in Alexandria were being subject not only to ridiculing, but also to persecution, as was the case with the pogrom of 38 C.E. Philo preferred the method of allegory because on Hellenistic philosophical and literary grounds it was a powerful tool with which to interpret ancient writings. Seeking the higher significance of the cultic texts, Philo reveals his belief that the purity of mind and soul takes precedence over the material relevance of Temple entities.

It is at this juncture that scholars found in Philo plausible Pythagorean, Orphic, Platonic metaphysics and Stoic influences. As Raasch argued, Philo accepted 'purification not simply as a cultic metaphor, but as a spiritual and philosophical process.' In this sense Philo may have been among the first to combine in one vision the Platonic '*catharsis*, the Stoics' ideal of *apatheia*..., and the Judaic conception of the thoughts of the heart as determining a man's basic moral orientation.' In addition, a number of scholars linked some texts in Philo with Oriental and mystic sources that existed in Alexandria at the time and in the larger context of Egypt, with practices such as 'moral purification from evil thoughts and passions' (Botica 2011: 271-272; Raasch 1968: 1-55). This is not surprising, since Alexandria – with its syncretism of mystic Oriental and rational Greek sources – had replaced Athens as the new cultural capital of the civilized world. Sources like these are evident in Philo when we realize how much he was preoccupied with the realm of the soul and the theme of 'inwardness' (Haussleiter 1957: 815-818; Mack 1984: 233ff.; Goodenough 1962: 134-160; Pepin 1967: 134ff.; Amir 1983: 30; Daly 1978: 403-405).

2. The Judaic background

As is evident from the table above, Philo dealt almost exclusively with Old Testament content. Is it feasible to assume that another stream of thought – possibly coming from Palestinian or other sources within Judaism – might have influenced him as well?

First, one may point out that re-interpreting the Jewish material cult was a process that took place not only in Hellenistic Judaism, but in Palestinian Judaism as well. And not necessarily in Jerusalem. This was the case at Qumran, a community that did not seem to be bound theologically or practically to the Temple of Jerusalem. On the contrary, Dead Sea texts show that many at Qumran viewed the Temple in Jerusalem to be too corrupt to be considered authoritative any longer. That is why the Qumranites developed their own interpretation and practice of Jewish sacrificial

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and purity laws (Botica 2011: 249; Brown 1963: 12ff.; Fiorenza 1976: 159-177). Still, while one may not want to rule out a priori any relationship between Philo and the Qumran community, it is evident that for Philo the Temple – even when pushed for its spiritual significance – had a unique place.

Second, we must state that some Philonic scholars doubt the direct relationship between Palestine and Philo on the grounds that Philo may have not been able to read the Old Testament or Rabbinic Judaism in the original languages. His writings do show that he seemed to have known at least the significance of the Hebrew names. Yet working with the etymology of names does not prove by itself an in depth knowledge of Hebrew or Aramaic. As Kamesar argued, it is entirely plausible to assume that lists with the etymology of Hebrew names were circulating in Alexandria and that Philo had access to them (Kamesar 2009: 65-91; Winston 1981: 334-335). But the fact remains that some of Philo's treaties resemble – at least in the larger thematic context – the Palestinian concerns with the relevance of Old Testament laws to the legal challenges of first century Judaism.

This observation has led various scholars to ask whether or not, or to what degree did Rabbinic thought influence Philo? For example Wolfson, Kasher and others pointed out possible links between Philo and Rabbinic oral (and possibly written) traditions from Palestine (Belkin 1936, 1940; Alon 1977: 89-137; Kasher 1985: 231-61). Philo never rennounced defening practices like circumcision, dietary laws and keeping the Sabbath (Mendelson 1988: 51-75). Given the significant number of Jews living in Egypt, it is conceivable that Rabbinic institutions did function in Alexandria and that there existed at least a minimal relationship to those in Palestine. For example, Modrzejewski and Mennard acknowledge that one can detect a Jewish *halakhah* in Egypt, yet one that was more fluid than the one in Palestine (Botica 2011: 192; Wolff 1960: 20-57). We know that Philo visited Jerusalem and, though his writings bear insufficient direct evidence in this aspect, he should have been familiar with halakhic traditions (Tcherikower 1957: 1.1-111, 32-33; Daube 1948: 64). Still, as Tcherikower noted,

> one cannot discuss the similarity between Philo and the Talmudic law till 'we have discarded the numerous cases 'where Philo's law, while similar to the rabbinic, may be accounted for (1) by Hellenistic or Roman influence; (2) by an almost unavoidable evolution of ideas; (3) by what must have been familiar to any Jew anywhere; (4) by a naïve interpretation of Scripture.'

To these criteria Tcherikower adds a fifth one, namely, 'Philo's own moral and philosophical ideas.' Similarly, Amir argued that in *De Specialibus Legibus* Philo 'did not seek to produce an overview of contemporary Jewish law,' but to prove the su-

periority of Moses over all other law systems and philosophies in the world, by 'throwing light on the meaning and intention of the Law' (Amir 1983: 30-32, 61; Danielou 1955: 88; Sandmel 1984: 31ff.). We may conclude that, overall, the consensus falls on the side of Hellenistic Alexandria, not Palestine, as the culture that exerted the most profound influence on Philo. Although parallels between Philo and Palestinian law have been produced, a consensus among scholars seems to have emerged that, unlike Philo, Palestinian law emphasized the *physical*, rather than the *mental* aspect of a crime, and was generally less libertine with the death penalty (Botica 2011: 188; Heinemann 1932: 5-15, 346-419; Hamerton-Kelly 1972: 3-26; Borgen 1984: 124ff.; Mack 1984: 236ff.; Hecht 1984: 53-61; Reihnartz 1993: 9-13; Jackson and Piatelli 1996: 34).

In the final consideration, we must not forget that Philo was simply a man of his time and place, that is, first century Alexandria. That is why one must avoid obsessively drawing parallels between Philo and Greek and/or Jewish sources. After all, Philo was a highly educated Jew who grew up in the cultural capital of the world and who lived at some great distance from the Temple in Jerusalem. But the distance that separated Jerusalem from Alexandria was not only a problem of space, but of worldview as well. What may have made Philo unable to experience fully the material relevance of the cult was not only the spatial separation, but the spiritual and the intellectual experience that he lived in Hellenistic Alexandria. Philo never disregarded the physical and religious importance of the Temple. At the same time, however, he was raised and influenced to appreciate even more the 'spiritual' and the 'rational' experience of worship (Nikiprowetzky 1996: 83; Hecht 1979-1980: 81).

The process of spiritualizing the cult in the Old and the New Testament

Since the Epistle to the Hebrews relies almost exclusively on the witness of the Old Testament, one is bound to ask if its author was influenced more by the Old Testament and less by Philo or other Hellenistic sources in the process of 'spiritualizing' the cult? Secondly, we must take into account the fact that there exists other New Testament texts that reveal the same tendency, some of which bear a Jewish, rather than Hellenistic, imprint. If that is the case, is it possible that the process of spiritualizing the cult transcended the Greek and Hellenistic (Alexandrinian) boundaries, both spatially and chronologically? Before answering this question it is important to see the data in the Old Testament that show this process at work.

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1. The phenomenon of criticism and spiritualization of the cult in the Old Testament

OT REINTERPRETATION/SPIRITUALIZATION OF THE PHYSICAL CULT		
OT CULTIC ACT/ENTITY	**OT SUPERIOR SIGNIFICANCE**	**REF**
Burnt offerings and sacrifices, fat of rams	Obeying the voice of the Lord	1Sam 15:22
Sacrifice, burnt offering	Broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart	Ps 51:16-17
Ox or a bull with horns and hoofs	Praising the name of God with a song; magnifying him with thanksgiving.	Ps 69:30
Attending/dwelling in the Holy Tent	Walking blamelessly, clean hands, speaking truth in heart, not lifting soul to deceit, not swearing deceitfully	Ps 15:1-2 Ps 24:3-4
Burnt offerings and sacrifices	Obeying God's voice, walking in Law	Jer 7:22

OT PROCESS OF CULT-CRITICISM

CULTIC ACT/ENTITY		GOD'S CRITICAL RESPONSE	REASON	REF
Religious practices/ entities (sacrifices, prayer, assemblies)	Multitude of sacrifices, burnt offerings of rams, fat of well-fed beasts, blood of bulls, lambs, goats	The Lord does not delight in them	Covenant failure	Is 1:11
	Frankincense from Sheba, sweet cane from a distant land, burnt offerings sacrifices	Not acceptable, nor pleasing to God	Covenant failure	Jer 6:20
	Burnt offerings, grain offerings, peace offerings of fattened animals	The Lord will not accept, nor look at them	Covenant failure	Am 5:22
	Thousands of rams, ten thousands of rivers of oil. Sacrificing human firstborn	The Lord will not be pleased with them	Covenant failure	Mic 6:7
	Sacrifice, offering, burnt offerings, sin offerings	The Lord does not delight in them	Priority of obedience	Ps 40:6
	The sacrifice of the wicked	Abomination to the Lord	Wickedness, evil intent of worshipers	Pr 15:8, 21:27
	Feasts and solemn assemblies	The Lord despises	Covenant failure	Am 5:21
	Slaughtering ox, sacrificing lamb, presenting grain offering, offering of frankincense	Worse than idol worshipers	Their soul delights in abominations	Is 66:3
	Prayer	Abomination to the Lord	Covenant failure	Pro 28:9
	Honoring God with mouth and lips	Astonish the wise with wonders	Insincere heart, lack of fear	Is 29:13

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OT PROCESS OF CULT-CRITICISM

CULTIC ACT/ENTITY		GOD'S CRITICAL RESPONSE	REASON	REF
Religious personnel	Priests teach for a price; its prophets practice divination for money	Disaster	Corruption	Mic. 3:11
	From prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely	Punishment	Corruption	Jer. 6:13
	Both prophet and priest are ungodly	Punishment	Ungodliness	Jer. 23:11
	Priests profane what is holy; they do violence to the law.	Divine justice	Profanation Violence to Law	Zeph. 3:4
Religious institutions (Temple)	Temple has become a den of robbers	Destruction of Temple	Corruption, idolatry	Jer. 7:11
	Prophet sent to prophesy against the Temple	Destruction	Corruption, idolatry	Jer 7:12

To a certain extent, the Old Testament paints a picture in which one finds some of the same challenges that existed in Greek religion with respect to „cult criticism.' That is, critical voices appear to have objected either against the material cult itself, or the misuse of the cult by those who were bound to honor its laws. But there exists a fundament difference between the native critics of the Greek cult and the Jewish ones. That is so because in pre-exilic Judaism it was the „traditional' camp, not its critics, that spearheaded the movement against the cult. A simple review of the verses listed in the table shows that most of the critical voices were prophetic. Why is this important?

A prophet was a person responsible with guarding the boundaries of the covenant. The prophet would be sent by God in times of crisis (for the most part) to expose the apostasy of Israel and call the people to repentance when the boundaries of the covenant were transgressed. If and when the message of the prophet contain proleptic and apocalyptic warnings, it was so because the people should know what consequences would follow from the actions. This means that the apparent critics of the cult were in fact the very defenders of the cult, as it was understood within the covenant between God and Israel. As they saw it, most people – priests and worship-

ers – abused the stipulations of the covenant by keeping the „letter,' while rejecting the „spirit,' of the Law. The phenomenom of 'cult-criticism' in Ancient Judaism was recognized and amply documented by contemporary scholarship (Barstad 2004: 13.623; Lafferty 2012: 84-88; Groenewald 2009: 47-62; Bibb 2006: 31-43; Tiemeyer 2006: 115-126).

That is why, well before the 6th century Greek sophoi, 8th century prophets like Isaiah charged that 'this people...honor me with their lips while their hearts are far from me' (29:13). No less accommodating were the words of Amos, through whom God said: 'I hate, I despise your religious festivals, and I take no pleasure in your solemn assemblies' (5:21). According to the verses we listed above, the Old Testament prophets had nothing against the Mosaic cult per se. The problem for them was not that the cultic institutions in themselves outdated or corrupt. It was the life style of the people and the manner in which they worshiped that attracted the wrath of God and hence criticism of the cult.

Furthermore, the prophets and the authors of Psalmodic or Sapiental literature never criticized the character of God as being immoral, as was the case with Greek sophoi (Botica 2004: 93-108). True, authors such as Job and Ecclesiastes, that raised the issue of 'innocent suffering' and the implicit assumption that God was less than just for allowing unjustice to go unpunished, show that the Old Testament felt comfortable enough to allow such criticism. Yet there remains a fundamental difference between Greek and Jewish 'cult criticism.' With their objection against the sexual immorality, violence and deceitful ways of the gods, the Greek sophists aimed at reinterpreting the core theological truths of Homeric religion. The Old Testament critical texts, however, never challenged the fundamental truths of Jewish historical revelation. On the contrary, it was the theological premises about the goodness of God and of His revelation that motivated Job and Ecclesiastes to raise the uncomfortable questions. Rather, what mattered for them first was the *inward intention* and *the outward, practical* life of the worshiper. The material cult was important, but it never superseded the preoccupation with the attitude and practical life of the worshiper (Botica 2004: 93-108).

This leads us to a preliminary conclusion: distinguishing between the spiritual and the material significance of the cult was a process that had begun before Philo of Alexandria. Scholars have recognized the fact that the overall data of the Old Testament – legal, historical, wisdom, poetic and prophetic texts – bear an evident consensus in supporting this vision. Whether cultic or private, for an external act of

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devotion to be effective in the eyes of God it must meet the *internal criteria* of heart purity (Clements 1996: 211-226; 1999: 81ff.; Nikiprowtesky 1996: 199-216; Mowinckel 1962: 2.21f.; Krauss 1965: 498-506; Kovaks 1974: 173ff.).

2. The process of criticizing, reinterpreting/spiritualizing the cult in the New Testament.[For a more complex version of this table see A. Botica, 'A Brief History of the Phenomenon of the 'Reinterpretation' or 'Spiritualization' of the Physical Cult,' *Perichoresis* 9.1 (2011): 110-13. Unless otherwise noted, the translation of biblical passages that I have used in this article is that of the English Standard Version, as found in *BibleWorks 8* (Norfolk, VA: BibleWorks, 2010)]

Physical Category	Moral/Spiritual/Symbolical Interpretation	Greek terminology	Reference
Temple	your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you	τὸ σῶμα ὑμῶν ναὸς τοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν ἁγίου πνεύματός ἐστιν	1Cor 6:19 (3:16)
	holy temple in the Lord	ναὸν ἅγιον ἐν κυρίῳ	Eph 2:21
	In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit	ἐν ᾧ καὶ ὑμεῖς συνοικοδομεῖσθε εἰς κατοικητήριον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν πνεύματι.	Eph 2:22
	for we are the temple of the living God, as God said, 'I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them'	ἡμεῖς γὰρ ναὸς θεοῦ ἐσμεν ζῶντος καθὼς εἶπεν ὁ θεὸς ὅτι ἐνοικήσω ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἐμπεριπατήσω	2Cor 6:16
	you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house	καὶ αὐτοὶ ὡς λίθοι ζῶ ντες οἰκοδομεῖσθε οἶκος πνευματικὸς	1Pet 2:5a

Physical Category	Moral/Spiritual/Symbolical Interpretation	Greek terminology	Reference
Food, Offerings and *Sacrifices*	to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ	ἀνενέγκαι πνευματικὰς θυσίας εὐπροσδέκτους [τῷ] θεῷ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.	1Pet 2:5b
	Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth	ὥστε ἑορτάζωμεν μὴ ἐν ζύμῃ παλαιᾷ μηδὲ ἐν ζύμῃ κακίας καὶ πονηρίας ἀλλ' ἐν ἀζύμοις εἰλικρινείας καὶ ἀληθείας.	1 Cor 5:8
	Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith	Ἀλλὰ εἰ καὶ σπένδομαι ἐπὶ τῇ θυσίᾳ καὶ λειτουργίᾳ τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν	Phil 2:17
	so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable	ἵνα γένηται ἡ προσφορὰ τῶν ἐθνῶν εὐπρόσδεκτος	Rom 15:16
	to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.	παραστῆσαι τὰ σώματα ὑμῶν θυσίαν ζῶσαν ἁγίαν εὐάρεστον τῷ θεῷ, τὴν λογικὴν λατρείαν ὑμῶν	Rom 12:1

When we refer to the 'reinterpretation' of cultic concepts, roles and institutions, what we have in mind is the process by which biblical authors sought spiritual significance in entities that would normally function as a physical act or part of the Jewish cultus (Botica 2011: 91-122; 2011: 99, 101ff.). Since the Temple was still standing when Hebrews and other New Testament letters were written, their authors never felt the tension of denying the material impact of the Jewish cult. Evidently, the resurrection of Christ changed radically the perception of the Christian church toward the Temple. But since the need for seeking higher spiritual truths in material entities had already been evident in the Old Testament, we are not surprised to see it at play in the New Testament as well. The 'transference' of cultic terms into the realm of spiritual significance is an undeniable New Testament phenomenon.

One representative passage that reflects the vision of New Testament authors to

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search for the spiritual significance of cultic is 1Peter 2:5: 'You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus.' Unlike other passages, 1Peter 2:5 refers both to the Temple and its sacrifices. As we argued elsewhere, the phrases 'spiritual house' (οἶκος πνευματικὸς) and 'spiritual sacrifices' (πνευματικὰς θυσίας) were part of a larger group of terms already circulating in the Hellenistic world, including Early Christian texts (Elliot 2000: 414ff.; Schmithals 1988: 429; Achtemeier 1996: 154-59). The Apostle Paul wrote that the Holy Spirit took residence in the body/soul of the believer, which made his or her body a 'temple of God' (1Cor 3:16; 6:19) – the equivalent of the 'spiritual house.' Paul also anticipated the vision that the Apostle Peter shared in 1Pet 2:5 ('you are being built up as a spiritual house') when he said that the believers as a group are 'the temple of the living God.'

We have already noted that the concept of God indwelling the human soul was attested in Greece as early as the Pythagorean School, then in Plato, Aristotle, the Hellenistic literature, as well as the Roman Stoa like Seneca, Epictetus, and M. Aurelius (Botica 2011: 258; Dodds 1954: 196; Haussleiter 1957: 794-796, 799-811). The Stoics in particular brought the concept of 'deus internus' to a new level with their doctrine of the Logos – the transcendent, yet immanent presence that dwells in the human soul (the λόγος and/or the νοῦς as the immanent deity in Stoicism). When viewed from the perspective of the philosophical texts, the notion of 'God indwelling the soul' took on a more rationalistic dimension (particularly in Stoic thought), even though Plato associated it with the gift of poetic and/or musical inspiration. When viewed from a more mystical perspective, the indwelling of God was believed to be responsible for ecstatic trances that would result in prophecy, oracles, and the like (Haussleiter 1957: 794-842).

The New Testament describes a different experience. As we may surmise from the general tone of Paul and Peter's letters, what made possible the indwelling of God in the human soul was the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit. Even though the Gospels did not emphasize explicitly the notion of the spiritualization of the cult, they laid the foundation for this experience when Jesus announced that after His ascent to the Father He would send the Holy Spirit on and within the soul of the believer (also Luke 1:15, 41, 67, as examples of the Holy Spirit's filling and indwelling prior to the Pentecost). In essence, this grounds the innovation of Paul and Peter in the witness of the Gospels and its subsequent development in the book of Acts (1:8; 2:4, etc.). The fact that we can establish parallels at the etymological level between the New Testament and Greek literature should not weaken the argument that the main source of influence for Paul and Peter were the Gospels and the Book of Acts – the least plausible candidates for direct Greek influence.

One could make a similar case on the argument on 'spiritual sacrifices' (πνευματικὰς θυσίας), 'spiritual worship' (λογικὴν λατρείαν) or 'living sacrifices' (θυσίαν ζῶσαν) – expressions reflecting the phenomenon of the spiritualization of the cult (Cranfield 1979: 602; Dunn 1988: 711; Fitzmeyer (1993: 640-644; Schreiner 1988> 646-647; Schmithals 1988: 429ff.; Fergusson 1970: 1154). Nevertheless, here too the link between the Old Testament and these authors is very evident. Both Paul and Peter drew inspiration from the Old Testament for virtually all of their most important doctrines (e.g., expiation, ransom/redemption, justification by faith, resurrection, etc.). Why would they not rely on the same source when they sought the 'higher meaning' behind the material cult? Especially since we established that reinterpreting the cult was a process already at work in the Psalmodic and Prophetic literature (Morris 1993; Fiorenza 1976: 159-177).

In addition, as we have argued in *The Concept of Intention*, the preoccupation with matters of the heart versus external appearances was equally important to the Old Testament authors (Botica 2011: 95ff.; Nowell 1999: 17-29; Hogg 1911: 49-91; North 1993: 577-597). This is proven by the wide spectrum of terms that Old Testament authors employed when describing the notion of 'inwardness.' Notice the nouns and the verbs in the following list: *heart (*standing for 'mind, brain, thoughts'), *kidneys* ('emotion, thought, feeling'), *bosom, inwards* ('the inward life'), *womb* ('inmost soul') *soul* ('inward life'), *spirit, breath* ('inward life'), *inclination, striving, predisposition, intention, thought,* and the verbs of 'discernment'*: to plan, intend, devise, purpose, conceive,* or the verbs *to test, search, visit, try, prove, seek, know, perceive* (the heart or the thoughts of the heart). The same vision holds true for the rest of the New Testament. For example, sampling only the first letter of the apostle Peter, we notice how normal seemed to be the transference of physical terms to the realm of spiritual experiences.

τὰς ὀσφύας τῆς διανοίας (the loins of your minds, 1Pet 1:13)
τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν ἡγνικότες (purifying your souls, 1Pet 1:22)
τὸ λογικὸν ἄδολον γάλα (the pure spiritual milk, 1Pet 2:2)
οἶκος πνευματικὸς (spiritual house, 1Pet 2:5)
πνευματικὰς θυσίας (spiritual offerings, 1Pet 2:5)
ὁ κρυπτὸς τῆς καρδίας ἄνθρωπος (the hidden person of the heart, 1Pet 3:4)
τὸν Χριστὸν ἁγιάσατε ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν (sanctify Christ in your hearts, 1Pet 3:15)

One may also note that the verb ἁγιάζω (to make holy, to set apart), which is a LXX translation of the Hebrew קדשׁ and clearly 'a cultic term, with the sense to sanctify/set apart as holy a cultic entity (Sabbath day, priestly clothes, the altar, the tent, the priest/levite) - see Exod 19:23, 20:11, 29:27' (Botica 2011: 115).

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Here too we observe the two characteristics that so far defined the process of spiritualization of cultic (and other physical) entities. First, the New Testament authors continued the process that had already begun in the Old Testament. They knew that for every external act to be received by God, there has to be a proper inward transformation. Second, the authors were familiar with, and used terms and expressions consecrated by Graeco-Roman authors. This was a normal process, as it is expected for a minority group to be influenced at the level of language by the richer and more dominant culture in which they lived.

The process of criticizing and/or spiritualizing the cult in the Epistle to the Hebrews

Arguably, the one particular name that commentators referred to more than any other in the context of placing Hebrews within the worldview of Hellenism was the Philo of Alexandria. The theories have ranged from maximal, direct Philonic influence on Hebrews, to indirect, minimal or no relationship between the two (Williamson 1970; Sowers 1965; Dunhill 2005: 228). Whether or not the author of Hebrews had access to the writings of Philo it is impossible to establish with any degree of certainty. Scholars have refrained from asserting either conscious borrowing by the author of Hebrews or direct Philonic influence. Since both sources share similarities on the level of terminology and shared conceptual themes with other Hellenistic texts, it is more likely that we can explain them in light of the shared Hellenistic environment in which they worked. We have already listed some of the reasons why Philo went to so great 'allegorical lengths' to prove the superiority of the spiritual over the material significance of the cult. Some scholars believe that the author of 'Hebrews makes just as much of the Jerusalem cult as does Philo (Siegert 2009: 175-209).

But a theory is only as convincing as the evidence on which it rests. In order to determine the sources that appear to have influenced the author of Hebrews, it is essential that we examine the textual data. In this sense, we have divided the verses that are relevant to this theory in two groups. The first table lists the passages in which the author compares events and entities (cultic and non-cultic) of the Old Testament with the new age inaugurated by God in the person of Jesus Christ.

THE FULFILLMENT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT EVENTS/ENTITIES

OT ACT/ENTITY	NT SUPERIOR SIGNIFICANCE	HEBREWS
The Sinai generation did not enter rest	The Church generation will enter rest	4:3-10

THE FULFILLMENT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT EVENTS/ENTITIES

OT ACT/ENTITY	NT SUPERIOR SIGNIFICANCE	HEBREWS
Human priest unable to sympathize with weakness	High Priest Jesus able to sympathize with weakness	4:14; 5:1-3
Levitical priests did not attain perfection	Jesus named priest from order of Melchizedek	7:11, 15
Levitical priests subject to limited office by death	High Priest Jesus guarantor of better covenant because he continues forever	7:23-24
The Law appoints priests in their weakness, who offer sacrifice for their own sins	Jesus is holy, innocent, unstained, separated, perfect, and offered himself as sacrifice	7:26-28
Levitical priests offer sacrifices on earth, in tenth made by human hands	Jesus is priest in high places, not necessary to offer sacrifices	8:1-4
Ministry of priests enacted by Law	Ministry of Jesus more excellent, covenant better since it is enacted on better promises	8:5-6
First covenant was not faultless, made obsolete	New covenant written on people's hearts	8:7-13
Earthly Temple limited by repeated sacrifices and High Priest enters it every year	Heavenly Temple not made by human hands, Jesus sacrificed himself and entered heavenly Temple once for all	9:1-11, 25-26 10:1-3
Animal blood purified the flesh, offers temporal forgiveness, unable to remove sins	Blood of Jesus purifies conscience, offers eternal redemption once for all, perfects those it sanctified	9:13-14 10:4, 10, 14, 22
Earthly Temple is a copy and a shadow	Heavenly Temple is eternal	9:23; 10:1
OT believers received temporary promises	New Testament believers saw promises fulfilled	11:39-40
OT believers could not endure the blazing fire, darkness, gloom and voice at Mount Sinai	NT believers approached the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem	12:18-29

First, it is evident that the source that influenced the author of Hebrews beyond any degree of uncertainty is the Old Testament. Virtually every important feature that defines the ministry of Jesus Christ and of the church has an equivalent in the revelation of Old Testament. This means that Hebrews shares the same vision that is so evident in the rest of the New Testament. Which leads us to the second conclusion, namely, that Jesus Christ fulfills the expectations that were already anticipated in the Old Testament.

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The one concept that works as a common denominator for these verses is the idea of 'superiority.' The New Testament generation received a greater blessing than the Sinai generation. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ had a definitive, much greater impact than the sacrifices that were brought by Levitical priests. The list could go on.

As we will conclude later, the leading theme that characterizes the Epistle to the Hebrews is 'fulfillment.' What this means, however, is not that Christ invalidates the history or the institutions of the Old Covenant. As the author of Hebrews sees it, they were temporal and limited symbols to a lasting reality. Even though they were superseded by person of Christ, they played an important role in the history of redemption. The point of the author was not to disprove the utility of the Mosaic system for the historical circumstances in which it functioned. One could not find a greater discrepancy between the Greek criticism of the cult and the approach taken in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The argument that Hebrews makes is not an 'either-or' case, but a cumulative construct in which the efficacy of the former revelation ('Long ago, at many times and in many ways God spoke') has been fulfilled in the new revelation of Christ ('but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son').

THE RE-EVALUATION OF OT CULTIC/PHYSICAL ENTITIES

Physical Category	Spiritual/Symbolical Interpretation	Greek terminology	Reference
Temple	but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And *we are his house*	Χριστὸς δὲ ὡς υἱὸς ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ· οὗ οἶκός ἐσμεν ἡμεῖς	Heb 3:6
Food, Offerings and *Sacrifices*	offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the *fruit of lips* that acknowledge his name.	ἀναφέρωμεν θυσίαν αἰνέσεως διὰ παντὸς τῷ θεῷ, τοῦτ' ἔστιν καρπὸν χειλέων ὁμολογούντων τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ.	Heb 13:15
	Do not neglect *to do good and to share what you have*, for such *sacrifices* are pleasing to God	τῆς δὲ εὐποιΐας καὶ κοινωνίας μὴ ἐπιλανθάνεσθε· τοιαύταις γὰρ θυσίαις εὐαρεστεῖται ὁ θεός.	Heb 13:16
	blood of Christ will *purify our conscience* from dead works to serve the living God	τὸ αἷμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ καθαριεῖ τὴν συνείδησιν ἡμῶν ἀπὸ νεκρῶν ἔργων	Heb 9:14
	our hearts sprinkled clean (by the blood of Jesus)	ῥεραντισμένοι τὰς καρδίας ἀπὸ συνειδήσεως πονηρᾶς	Heb 10:19, 22
	our bodies washed with pure water	λελουσμένοι τὸ σῶμα ὕδατι καθαρῷ·	Heb 10:22

We believe that the conclusions we drew in the previous section apply to this section as well. When Hebrews 10:22-23 states that the blood of Christ purifies the conscience of the believers, it essentially describes a reality that was already anticipated by the Old Testament. When Ezechiel 36:25-26 refers to the physical process of sprinkling, it uses a verb that appears quite often in the context of Levitical purification (Lev 4). This time, however, the verb קרז ('to sprinkle') describes an operation that affects the spiritual realm of things ('I will sprinkle clean water on you...and I will give you a new heart.'). This confirms what we have been observing so far in our study. Transfering cultic entities into the realm of spiritual processes is a process of 'theological germination' in the Old Testament that will flourish in the New. Note, however, that Ezekiel 36 describes an event with ramifications to be observed in the future. What this means for the author of Hebrews is that the transference of cultic entities into the realm of spiritual realities is possible because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. For Hebrews, what was anticipated by the Old Testament has been fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.

Likewise, when Hebrews 9:23 states that the earthly temple is but a shadow of a heavenly reality, it shows that the cultic entity of the Old Testament served as a symbol – nonetheless, a historical one – for the higher reality to be fulfilled in the person of Christ. The ministry of bringing gifts and sacrifices to the Sanctuary is 'a copy and shadow' (ὑποδείγματι καὶ σκιᾷ) of the heavenly things (note especially 9:23 ['the copies of the heavenly things'] and 10:1 ['the law has but a shadow of the good things to come']. For '… when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain."'

As we already noted, various authors have suggested that in the distinction between 'the material world and the heavenly world' the author of Hebrews might have been influenced by the classical dualism of Plato. According to Lane, it was possible that this worldview was mediated to the author of Hebrews 'by Philo or by the influence of an Alexandrian education' (Lane 1991: 207).

Others argued that, since for the author of Hebrews the 'higher' significance is Christ – who after all came in the material world in bodily, not spiritual, form – it is unlikely that Platonism or Philo had a direct influence on Hebrews. In that sense, if there appears to be any resemblance between Hebrews and Plato and/or Philo, it is 'merely verbal.' In the view of F.F. Bruce, the similarities work more on the level of language than essential thought. The fundamental worldview of the author of Hebrews is too biblically Judaic to have been shaped at the core by classical or 'Philonic' Platonism (Bruce 1990: 28; cf. Ellingworth 1993: 397; Hagner 2002: 30ff.).

If this is the case, one may argue that the tendency to compare the Old Covenant

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with the New should be understood primarily in the larger context of the 'fulfillment' world view of the Gospels. Virtually all four Gospels contain 'fulfillment' passages, either introduced by the narrators of the Gospels themselves, or presented as the very words of Jesus. One would especially note in this case the Matthean formulae 'This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken through the prophet...' (e.g. Mat 2:15), or the reasoning behind the cases 'You have heard that it was said...., but I say to you.' The superiority of Jesus over the Law as taught and practiced by the Pharisees, over Sabbath, Temple, priests and sacrifices, not to mention his authority over Abraham and Moses – all these indicate that the reasoning of the author of Hebrews fits comfortably in the wider context of the Gospels.

Now, most commentators who have drawn a clear line of distinction between Philo and Hebrews focused on the thematic similarities and/or differences between the two. Typical themes here include Philo vs Hebrews' vision on the High Priest and Christ, Moses, and the heavenly realm. It is from this narrower, historical perspective that one may justifiably conclude that the influence of Philo on Hebrews was at best minimal or for the most part nonexistent.

However, when we approach this issue from the perspective of how a Hellenist believer (Jewish or early Christian) would have viewed the Old Testament cult and how, more specifically, he or she appropriated its personal significance, then the relationship between Philo and Hebrews takes on a different dimension. It is at this point that one finds a shared vision between the two authors on the cult of the Old Testament. Namely, that the cult, with all its immediate material benefits, was meant to have an ultimate impact upon the soul more so than on the body. In this sense, both Philo and Hebrews assume the environment of the Hellenistic quest for the ultimate redemption of the soul. For Philo, when the Old Testament cult is interpreted appropriately – that is, allegorically – it will serve as a means for the purification and the ultimate redemption of the soul. For Hebrews, when the Old Testament is understood correctly – that is, from the perspective of the Christ event – it will serve as a proleptic revelation, as a Christological prototype for Jesus Christ. Hence, the evident superiority of the life, death and resurrection of Christ over the material cult of the Old Testament (Schenk 2003: 33ff.).

Conclusion

Our study has shown that both the author of Hebrews and Philo aimed at transcending the material boundaries of the cult. Yet, they were driven by different motivations and for the most part had radically different reasons for doing so.

First of all, Philo of Alexandria was a man of his times. The cultural streams of Platonism and Hellenism had flown into Alexandria long before Philo was born,

so much so that during his life Philo benefited from the most vibrant philosophical environment the world knew at the time. As we already argued, the early Greek allegorists, Stoic thought and Hellenism in general shaped the philosophical mindset of Philo. To this one must add the factor of the spatial and cultural distance between Philo and the material cult in Jerusalem. That is why, when comparing Philo with the Epistle to the Hebrews, one must take into consideration the fundamental criterion that differentiates between the two. Both are interpreting the Scriptures. Both are expecting their readers to respond appropriately. Philo passes all content through the filter of allegory in order to present the Scripture as a superior philosophical treatise. Philo preferred the allegorical method because of his formation as an Alexandrian Hellenistic philosopher, as is evident from his mastery of the Greek language and the profound familiarity with Platonic and Hellenistic Philosophy (Dreyer 1970: 135-140; Mendelson 1988: 54ff.; Amir 1983: 124-127; Mack 1984: 250ff.).

Consequently, no one and nothing escapes allegorization in Philo: Abel, Abraham, Aaron, Moses, the Temple, sacrifices and offerings and worship. Reading Philo, one has the sense of reading Hellenistic moral and religious philosophy at its best. And as an apologist, Philo makes Moses or other Old Testament characters the ultimate embodiment of the true philosoper.

The author of Hebrews, however, read the Scripture through the lenses of the 'fulfillment' promise. Unlike Philo, who brought the art of allegorization to hear perfection, he writes to a church in a time of crisis, exhorting the people to consider Jesus, the author and perfecter of their faith. He too appeals to Old Testament characters like Abel, Noah, Abraham and the patriarchs, Moses and the rest of the heroes of faith. But for him the Old Testament is less a source to be interpreted allegorically, and more a prophecy that anticipated the coming of Christ. That is why reading Hebrews creates the indellible sense that revelation is a process in history that points forward to its fulfillment in Christ. In this sense, Hebrews shares the vision that animated the rest of the authors of the New Testament, who saw in the Law of Moses a precursor that foreshadowed Jesus Christ (Cranfield 1979: 602-603; Schmithals 1988: 429; Dunn 1988: 711; Schreiner 1998: 645)

Second, we must remember that before Philo became a philosopher he was a Jew. In spite of being born in a wealthy family and benefiting from the fellowship of a strong Jewish community, Philo felt personally the anti-Semitic polemics that the Greek populace professed against the Jews of Alexandria. Both ancient and contemporary authors attest to deadly pogroms of 38 C.E. that the Jews suffered at the hands of the Alexandrians during the time of Philo. A witness to the pogroms, Philo narrates in *An Embassy to Gaius* how he headed a Jewish delegation to Rome in order to petition emperor Caligula to intervene on behalf of the Jews, who were being mur-

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dered and deprived of their property (Schwartz 2012: 149-166; Gruen 2004: 54-83; Schaefer 2009: 136-160).

To understand the intensity of the conflict between the Greeks and Jews of Alexandria, one may remember that several decades after Philo, Josephus had to write the powerful treatise *Against Apion* in order to combat Apion, 'a Greek grammarian and head of the Alexandrian school' who wrote fantastic stories about the Exodus from Egypt and made all sorts of malicious assertions about the customs of the Alexandrian Jews (Botica 2015: 55-68; Schurer 1973: 3.605). The fact that Josephus engaged in this polemic against the students of Apion while living in Rome, as well as names like Frontinus, Quintillian, Martial, Democritus, Nicarchus, Epictetus, Plutarch, and Juvenal – who engaged in anti-Semitism – proves how intense the tension between Greeks and Jews had been in Alexandria (Kasher 1996: 151). It is now easier to comprehend the motivation Philo may have had in presenting Judaism to a Greek audience as a system of thought compatible with the best Greek treaties.

Third, as a Jewish thinker Philo must have felt personally the challenge raised by Greek philosophers against the 'anthropological character of the myths' (Botica 2011: 259-260). In their eyes, the accounts of Moses about God were no less mythological than the Homeric portrayal of the gods. As a Jew, however, Philo shared a different view of the history of Israel. The fact that he applied the allegorical method in interpreting Moses did not mean that he viewed the Jewish Legislator and his laws as mythological (Kamesar 1988: 56-65; 1997: 143-189). On the contrary, Philo reverted to allegory simply because he aimed at convincing the Alexandrian Hellenistic audience 'of the superiority of the biblical account.' For him the Hebrew Scriptures were the highest form of philosophy and Plato was, in fact, a follower of Moses (Leonard 2012: 21.

In Hebrews we find clues that paint a scenario similar to the situation in Alexandria, the year 38 C.E. Hebrews 10:32 describes a church who struggled with public humiliation, loss of property, affliction and imprisonment (13:3). Repeated warnings against apostasy (2:1; 3:12; 4:1; 6:4; 10:23, 26; 12:3) indicate that some of her members began showing signs of weakness. Perhaps others felt that Jerusalem, with all its grandeur, the multiplicity of sacrifices and the promise of forgiveness of sins, was a more convincing alternative to merely believing in Christ.

That is why, unlike Philo, the author of Hebrews did not seek to convince the audience that the Old Testament was superior to pagan philosophy and culture, but that the Old Testament pointed to Christ and that in Him the church finds the Author and the Captain of her faith. As we indicated, Hebrews never derided the Temple, but made the irrefutable argument that the entire Old Testament pointed to something better; a reality neither bound by human weakness, nor restricted by time. Hebrews

points to Christ. It lacks the philosophical finesse of Philo, but then, it never aimed at winning philosophical arguments. Hebrews emphasizes the urgency of human responsibility in light of the advent of Christ.

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