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# Faithfulness and the Purpose of Hebrews

A Social Identity Approach

Matthew J. Marohl



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*A Social Identity Approach*

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## Contents

*Acknowledgments / ix*

*Introduction / xi*

1 The Historical Critical Investigation  
of the Identity of the Addressees of Hebrews:  
An Overview and Critique / 1

2 The Historical Critical Investigation  
of the Purpose of Hebrews:  
An Overview and Critique / 37

3 Social Identity Theory and Hebrews / 61

4 Social Identity Theory  
and First-Century Mediterranean Culture / 81

5 “Us” and “Them”:  
the “Faithful” and the “Unfaithful” / 99

6 The Faithfulness of Jesus in Hebrews / 125

7 Present Temporal Orientation  
and Faithfulness in Hebrews / 149

8 Faithfulness and the Purpose of Hebrews / 181

*Bibliography / 193*

*To John Arthur  
and  
Nola Gustafson*

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—Matthew J. Marohl  
November, 2007





## Introduction

WHY was Hebrews written? What was the purpose of the text? The discussion of the purpose of Hebrews is traditionally connected to the discussion of the identity and social context of the addressees. In other words, it is often assumed that to answer why Hebrews was written, it must first be established to whom was Hebrews written. Herein lies a problem for modern readers of the text. There is little, if any, consensus regarding the identity of the addressees. In turn, there is little, if any, consensus regarding the purpose of Hebrews. While most still hold to the “traditional view,” that the addressees were “Jewish Christians” in danger of falling back into “Judaism,” a growing number of interpreters have concluded that nothing can be known regarding the identity of the addressees.<sup>1</sup> And so the debate continues. Who were the addressees of Hebrews? And, perhaps more importantly, what was the purpose of the text? The aim of this project is to provide fresh answers to these questions by employing that branch of social psychology known as social identity theory.

The founder of social identity theory, Henri Tajfel, describes the process of social categorization as the simplifying and systematizing of one’s environment, by placing persons, objects, or events into groups with similar persons, objects, or events.<sup>2</sup> In other words, when individuals encounter new persons, objects, or events, they evaluate them and place them into a category which makes sense to them. Tajfel further notes that

1. While most biblical interpreters continue to use the terms “Jew,” “Gentile,” and “Christian,” in the discussion of the identity of the addressees of Hebrews, I will argue at the end of ch. 1 that these terms are problematic. As will be seen below, I will use the terms Judean, non-Judean, and Christ-followers in the discussion of the possible identity of the addressees. I will, then, place the terms “Jew,” “Gentile,” and “Christian” in quotation marks to call attention to both the problematic terms used by other interpreters and my disapproval of their continued use.

2. Tajfel 1978b: 61.

this categorization process is controlled by the accentuation effect, which is the tendency to accentuate the similarities between persons, objects, or events which have been placed within the same category.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, social categorization helps to structure what would otherwise be a chaotic environment. Individuals are constantly bombarded with new social situations and without a method of simplifying and systematizing these experiences it would be difficult to evaluate and interpret the situation.

Perhaps at this point, a practical example of the social categorization process would be helpful. Shortly after the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Scrolls and the group which they were thought to represent were commonly categorized as “Essene.” This categorization simplified and systematized the Scrolls, and helped to make sense of this new information. Further, this categorization assisted in providing structure to the discovery. While many, perhaps most, interpreters still hold to the “Essene-hypothesis,” or a variation of the hypothesis, some have questioned the validity of this initial categorization. Regardless of one’s view concerning the Dead Sea Scrolls, there is little debate over the influence that this categorization has had within the subsequent study of the Scrolls. It is not, however, only in the case of a rare discovery that we engage in the process of social categorization. This process occurs whenever we encounter new persons, objects, or events. Whether categorizing the Dead Sea Scrolls as being “Essene” or categorizing an acquaintance as being a “bookworm,” we tend to simplify and systematize our environment through the process of social categorization.

So, why begin a book concerned with the identity of the addressees of Hebrews and the purpose of the text with a description of the social categorization process? In short, while historical critics have not used the language of Henri Tajfel, the historical-critical method for examining identity is one of social categorization. In terms of the social categorization process, historical critics seek to place the addressees of Hebrews into a category with similar first-century Mediterranean people. In other words, the historical critic seeks to categorize the identity of the addressees of Hebrews. Who were the addressees, were they “Jewish” or “Gentile Christians?” Perhaps they were former Essenes, Samaritans, or Ebionites? Like the straight-forward nature of the question, the historical-critical method for analyzing identity is one of simplicity. What were the various

3. Hogg and Abrams 1988: 19.

groups of the first-century Mediterranean world? What were the unique characteristics of these groups? Does the text point to any of these unique characteristics? While both the question and the method of inquiry may appear simple, the multiplicity of answers and a commonly voiced frustration point to a deeper, problematic level to this question. Perhaps, then, it is best to begin with a follow-up question: Why has it been so difficult to answer the question: Who were the addressees?

Albert Vanhoye, in his text, *Structure and Message of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, explains that the author does not offer an exact designation of the addressees.

The Hebrews are never named in the document. Nor is the name “Jews,” so frequently used by Paul, found in it, nor “Israelites,” nor any reference to the “circumcision.” In fact, the text contains no exact designation of the addressees. It is clearly speaking to Christians (cf. Heb 3:14), and Christians of long standing at that (cf. 5:12). But the author neither indicates the place where they live nor their ethnic background. He does not speak of what they were before their conversion. He does not make use of any distinction between Jew and pagans. The only reality which attracts his attention is their calling to be Christians: with might and main he seeks to foster this call (cf. 2:3–4; 3:1; 4:14; 10:19–25; 12:22–25; 13:7–8).<sup>4</sup>

In this important observation, Vanhoye points to one of the central problems in the present discussion of the identity of the addressees. Namely, Hebrews does not offer the type of information commonly used by historical critics in the discussion of identity.

Vanhoye’s observation is certainly not unique. It has become almost commonplace to refer to the “mystery” of Hebrews, to speak of Hebrews as an “enigma.” It is not only the question of the identity of the addressees that has proven problematic for historical critics, the identity of the author, the date of the text, its literary genre, its place of writing, its destination, the social context in which it was written, its structure, and its very purpose have all been widely debated and difficult to discern. For many, these problems may all be traced to the text’s lack of specific historical data. Therefore, while some continue to attempt to answer the question, “Who where the addressees of Hebrews?,” others voice frustration at the

4. Vanhoye 1989: 2.

perceived impossibility of the task. Perhaps the best example of such frustration is found in the writing of Floyd V. Filson. According to him, the identity of the addressees cannot be known.

It is unfortunate that so much attention has been paid to questions of authorship, destination, place of writing and date. No adequate evidence is available to support a definitive and dependable answer. The frustratingly inconclusive study of Hebrews should make it clear that we cannot find certain answers to the questions: Who? To whom? From where? When?<sup>5</sup>

Frustration, such as that voiced by Filson, is justified. There is an incompatibility of the historical-critical method to the data available in Hebrews. However, this may only be a symptom of a much more significant problem associated with a traditional historical-critical investigation. The larger issue concerns the categories commonly used by historical critics. As noted above, social categorization is a process by which individuals simplify and systematize their environment by placing new persons, objects, or events into categories with similar persons, objects, or events. This means that the individual places the new person, object, or event into a category which the individual deems appropriate, a category that the individual has used before to simplify and systematize the environment. Because the categorization process of historical criticism relies upon categories selected and defined by modern interpreters, the categories may be inadequate. As we will see, the inadequacies of such modern categories include both the use of problematic terminology and problematic conceptions of the nature of the various first-century groups. For example, a modern reader might envision the first-century addressees as having been “Jewish.” Further, “Judaism” might be understood to be a “religion.” For some, the “religion” of “Judaism” is understood to have been in direct conflict or competition with the “religion” of “Christianity.” Attempting to place the addressees into one of the categories with which *we* are familiar, is, after all, a natural part of *our* social categorization process. However, in order to understand the identity of the addressees, we must attempt to understand *their* process of social categorization. In other words, *what categories did the addressees use to simplify and systematize their environment?* In short, the information present in Hebrews does not correspond to the categories proposed by historical critics, not because Hebrews does not

5. Filson 1978: 12.

offer relevant data, but because historical critics have not been employing appropriate categories. This reading will utilize social identity theory to identify and interpret the social categories employed by the author and the addressees of Hebrews and, finally, to identify and interpret the purpose of the text itself.

In ch. 1, I will outline the historical critical process for examining identity. I present a description of each of the eight common proposals concerning the identity of the addressees of Hebrews. Finally, I engage in a critical examination of the categorization process of historical criticism. At the end of the chapter, I will propose the problem of understanding the identity of the addressees is not rooted in a lack of information within the text but with an inadequate conceptual framework for understanding identity. An adequate conceptual framework will seek to answer two essential questions: How did first-century Mediterranean groups form and maintain identity? What social categories were employed by the author and the addressees of Hebrews?

The discussion of the identity of the addressees is inherently connected with the discussion of the purpose of the text. For that reason, ch. 2 will follow the basic structure of ch. 1. I outline the historical critical process for analyzing the purpose of a text. I provide a description of each of the four common proposals concerning the purpose of Hebrews. Finally, I engage in an examination of the historical-critical process for analyzing the purpose of Hebrews. At the end of the second chapter, I will propose that the multiplicity of proposals regarding the purpose of the text reflects the multiplicity of proposals regarding the identity of the addressees. A proposal regarding identity which is based upon an inappropriate conceptual framework will necessarily produce an inadequate proposal regarding the purpose of Hebrews.

Since an appropriate conceptual framework for understanding identity is needed in order to move forward in the discussion of the addressees of Hebrews, I offer a thorough overview of social identity theory, the theoretical framework with which I come at the problem in a new way. Social identity theory is a social psychological theory that was first proposed in the 1970s by Henri Tajfel and which has undergone two decades of helpful critique and development by subsequent social psychologists. This theory not only offers insight into the social categorization process, but more importantly, helps to describe how social groups form and maintain identity. Therefore, ch. 3 describes not only the social categorization process, but

also defines social identity, the role of social comparison in identity formation and maintenance, and the function of time within social identity. In addition, and of particular importance to the study of Hebrews, I discuss the nature of outgroups according to social identity theory. I consider, for example, whether an outgroup must be a *real* group, and whether an ingroup might compare itself to a *symbolic* outgroup.

While social identity theory helps to describe how groups form and maintain identity, an important question remains unanswered. Is social identity theory an appropriate conceptual framework within which to examine the identity of the addressees of Hebrews? In ch. 4, I consider the cultural context of the first-century Mediterranean world, including in the discussion the dynamic of temporal orientation. The chapter's main thesis is that unlike the future temporal orientation of most twenty-first century North Atlantic interpreters, the addressees of Hebrews were likely to have had a present temporal orientation. I propose that social identity theory integrated with a working model of present temporal orientation serves as an appropriate conceptual framework within which to examine the identity of the addressees of Hebrews.

The first step in reading Hebrews within the framework of social identity theory involves the consideration of whether or not the addressees of Hebrews understood themselves as having been a social group. In other words, did the addressees understand themselves to be a distinct group, an "us"? I argue that an affirmative answer to the question arises from data within the text. The social categories employed by the author and the addressees of Hebrews are identified. Further, these social categories are shown to reveal how the addressees of Hebrews understood themselves. Rather than rely upon the categories of "Jewish Christian" or "Gentile Christian," ch. 5 argues that the addressees of Hebrews understood their own identity in terms of *faithfulness*.

The addressees of Hebrews understood themselves to be "the faithful." The author develops this primary identity descriptor in his description of the faithfulness of Jesus. Repeatedly, the faithfulness of Jesus is understood through comparison. The faithfulness of Jesus is compared to that of Moses (Heb 3:1-6). Likewise, his faithfulness is compared to that of the "great cloud of witnesses" (Heb 12:1-2). In ch. 6, I employ two relevant areas of social identity theory—the theory of shared life stories and the theory of prototypicality—in order to understand the author's use of comparison and his emphasis on the faithfulness of Jesus.

Throughout *Hebrews*, the author thoroughly integrates issues of identity, faithfulness, and time. Therefore, to understand more fully the social identity in *Hebrews*, it is necessary to consider the role of time within the text. Specifically, ch. 7 addresses four questions regarding temporality. First, what was the role of the antecedent in *Hebrews*? Second, what was the role of the forthcoming? Third, what was the role of foresight? Fourth, is there evidence of imaginary time in *Hebrews*? In addition, this chapter will include a description of the meaning of the promised “rest.” We find that the addressees are encouraged to “look forward by looking back.”

In ch. 8, I broaden the discussion from the identity of the addressees of *Hebrews* to the purpose of the text. The discussion of the purpose of *Hebrews* has traditionally been connected to the discussion of the identity and social context of the addressees of *Hebrews*. Chapter 1 shows there is both a multiplicity of proposals regarding the identity of the addressees and a growing frustration over the question of purpose. Chapter 2 highlights the multiplicity of proposals regarding the purpose of *Hebrews*. However, if we take seriously the conclusions made in chs. 5–7 regarding the identity of the addressees, it is possible to present a new proposal regarding the purpose of the text. The proposal of ch. 8, based upon the culturally appropriate conceptual framework of social identity theory and present temporal orientation, can serve as a helpful tool for the interpretation of *Hebrews*.

Henri Tajfel could have had no concept of the far-reaching influence of social identity theory he first developed in the 1970s. Sadly, Tajfel died only a decade after it was first proposed. However, social psychologists around the world have continued to test and develop this important tool. In this book, social identity theory and a model of present temporal orientation provide the conceptual framework within which to understand the identity of the addressees of *Hebrews* and the purpose of the text. While such interdisciplinary projects are rarely imagined in the early stages of the development of such theories, subsequent projects such as this can be informative beyond the boundaries and limitations of both New Testament interpretation and social identity theory.





# 1

## The Historical Critical Investigation of the Identity of the Addressees of Hebrews: An Overview and Critique

THE discussion of the identity of the addressees of Hebrews often includes mixed reactions. While some readers conclude with great confidence that the identity of the addressees is made clear in the text, others conclude with equal confidence that the text offers little evidence of the addressees' identity. And so, the debate goes on. Who were the addressees of Hebrews? In this chapter, I will outline the historical critical method for examining identity, and specifically, the method that has been used in the discussion of the identity of the addressees of Hebrews. I will outline the eight most common proposals regarding the identity of the addressees. After an outline of the eight proposals, I will critique the categorization process of historical critics. Here, I will conclude that the problem inherent in the discussion of the identity of the addressees is not a lack of data in Hebrews, but lies in the use of inadequate categories. In other words, the information available in Hebrews may not neatly correspond to the categories commonly employed by historical critics, but this information does point to the social categories used by the author and the addressees.

## The Historical Critical Method and the Question of Identity<sup>1</sup>

The historical critical method for analyzing the probable identity of an individual or group is a three-step process. First, the historical critic must identify the various groups of the first-century Mediterranean world. For example, the interpreter might identify “Jews” and “Gentiles.” Second, the known individuals or groups are defined and differentiated by their “unique” characteristics. For example, one might understand “Jews” as having been circumcised and “Gentiles” as having been uncircumcised. Third, the historical critic closely examines the text for information which points to the unique characteristics of one of the known individuals or groups. For example, does the text in some way deal with the issue of circumcision? If so, does this information provide any clues to the identity of the individual or group? After this process of comparing the information available concerning a specific individual or group with the perceived characteristics of other individuals or groups, a conclusion is drawn regarding the identity of the individual or group in question.

Within this three-step process for examining the possible identity of an individual or group, the second and third steps tend to be the primary areas open for debate. Worded differently, the historical critical process often encourages debate over: (1) the unique characteristics of an individual or group and whether or not these characteristics are appropriate tools for categorization; and (2) the presence of data in a text which might conclusively point to a commonly recognized individual or group characteristic. For example, if a unique characteristic is proposed, is this characteristic true for all group members? Is this characteristic true of all group members regardless of location or time? Is this characteristic actually unique or do other groups share in this trait? Finally, is there any evidence in the text of this unique characteristic?

In the case of the identity of the addressees of Hebrews, I have examined the methods and results of nearly two hundred interpreters from over a 150-year period. The conclusions of the interpreters may be broken into eight categories. The addressees of Hebrews are variously under-

1. While historical criticism has proven to be the primary method with which to approach the question of the identity of the addressees of Hebrews, other methods have been employed. For example, with the canonical approach, Brevard Childs finds the addressees to have been “Christians” in danger of “falling away from their confession.” Childs 1984: 408–9.

stood to have been: (1) “Jewish Christians”; (2) “Gentile Christians”; (3) both “Jewish” and “Gentile Christians”; (4) a group that had some type of relationship to the Essenes; (5) Samaritan “Christians”; (6) Ebionite “Christians”; (7) “non-Christians”; and (8) “Christians.” I will outline each proposed group identity below, paying attention to both the assumptions concerning the unique characteristics of each group and the information available within Hebrews. While it is impossible to summarize the specific methodology of each work referenced in this chapter, a few generalizations can be made. First, Hebrews is commonly understood to have both “exposition”<sup>2</sup> and “exhortation.”<sup>3</sup> Second, the language of the exposition is often thought to reveal the unique characteristics of a specific group, and therefore, the identity of the addressees. For example, for those who understand the addressees to be “Jewish Christians,” the use of the Old Testament is often thought to be compatible with a unique group characteristic, that of knowledge of the Old Testament. Third, it is understood by many that the exhortation reveals the specific social situation of the addressees. For example, the addressees may be weakening in their commitment to “Christianity” or in danger of apostasy. Finally, this methodology is one of mixing and matching the above observations. In other words, matching the conclusions made from the exposition regarding identity with the conclusions made from the exhortation regarding social situation.

While understanding the roles of the exposition and the exhortation is important, there is an additional dynamic at work for many interpreters of Hebrews. There has long been a debate whether or not Hebrews presents a “Jewish-Christian” polemic.<sup>4</sup> For those who understand there to be such a polemic, the social situation of the addressees is most commonly understood to be a danger of “falling back” into “Judaism.”<sup>5</sup> However, oth-

2. There is a range of terms used to describe the “exposition” of Hebrews. For example, some refer to the “doctrine” of Hebrews while others use specific theological terms, such as “Christology” or “eschatology.”

3. A variety of terms are also used to describe the “exhortation” of Hebrews, for example, “paraenesis.” For an example of the discussion of “exposition” and “exhortation,” see Attridge 1989: 21; Childs 1984: 416; Matera 1994: 169–82; and the whole of Rhee 2001. For an argument against the use of the term “paraenesis,” see Esler 2003a: 51–63.

4. It is important to note that the term “polemic” is rarely defined. However, most interpreters use the term to mean two items (e.g. “groups,” “religions,” etc.) held in opposition or tension.

5. For an early example of this “traditional view,” see Alford 1864: 4/62. For a recent

ers have argued that the “Jewish-Christian” polemic indicates addressees who have been reluctant to sever their ties with “Judaism,”<sup>6</sup> are in fear of being excluded from temple worship,<sup>7</sup> or addressees who have grown lax or apathetic. For those who argue that a “Jewish-Christian” polemic does not exist within Hebrews,<sup>8</sup> the social situation of the addressees is often understood to be a need for encouragement<sup>9</sup> or that of suffering persecution.<sup>10</sup> Further, it is occasionally held that Hebrews reveals a “Gentile-Christian” polemic and the danger faced by the addressees is that of returning to “paganism” or “heathenism.”<sup>11</sup>

It may be helpful at this point to briefly examine a test case. George H. Guthrie finds that the “author uses theological concepts that were popular in Greek-speaking synagogues of the first-century.”<sup>12</sup> From this, Guthrie notes that the addressees were a mixed group of “Jews” and “Gentiles.”

Though some scholars have taken these insights to indicate a thoroughly Jewish audience for Hebrews, one must remember that many Gentiles affiliated themselves with first-century synagogues, either as proselytes or God-fearers. Consequently, some Gentiles came to Christ with a rich background in Jewish worship and extensive knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures. Therefore, the exact mix of Jews and Gentiles in this church group must remain a mystery.<sup>13</sup>

Next, Guthrie understands there to be a “Jewish-Christian” polemic and warns that “a potential danger to this community seems to lie in the temptation to reject Christianity and return to Judaism proper.”<sup>14</sup> Guthrie is just one example of how historical critical methodology is employed in the study of the addressees. For Guthrie, the knowledge of “Jewish” worship and scriptures is not a unique characteristic of “Jewish Christians,” but was a characteristic that was shared by “Gentile Christians.” Rather than

example, see Hagner 1990: 11.

6. For examples of this position, see Bruce 1990: 9; and Harvey 1985: 89.

7. For an example of this argument, see Ebrard 1853: 381–82.

8. Sandmel 1978: 120–22.

9. For an example of the need for encouragement, see Johnson 1986: 414–15.

10. For an example of “Christians” (in Italy) suffering persecution, see Filson 1978: 325.

11. Vos 1956: 18.

12. Guthrie 1998: 19.

13. *Ibid.*: 20.

14. *Ibid.*

arguing for a group comprised exclusively of either “Jewish” or “Gentile Christians,” Guthrie concludes that the group was mixed. Guthrie believes there to be a “Jewish-Christian” polemic inherent in Hebrews. Based upon this assumption, he finds that the specific social situation of the group is that of a threat of returning to “Judaism.”

As we will see below, each of Guthrie’s assumptions is widely debated. Is the use of the Old Testament and repeated references to “Jewish” cultic practice a sign of “Jewish” addressees? Or, as Guthrie argues, a sign of a mixed community? Is there a “Jewish-Christian” polemic within the text? If so, does this polemic help to illuminate the social context of the addressees? If not, what was the social context of the addressees? To best understand the complexity of this discussion, it is necessary to examine each of the proposals regarding the identity of the addressees. However, I will first consider the traditional superscription of this work

## To (the) Hebrews:<sup>15</sup>

### Superscription and the Identity of the Addressees

The discussion of the identity of the addressees of Hebrews often begins with a discussion of the superscription, ΤΙΠΟΣ ΕΒΡΑΙΟΥΣ. This title encourages the same set of questions in nearly every interpreter, “What is meant by the designation, ‘Hebrews?’” And, “Can this superscription inform our discussion of the identity of the addressees?”

The earliest known occurrence of ΤΙΠΟΣ ΕΒΡΑΙΟΥΣ is located in the superscription on folio 21r of P46 (ca. 200 CE). From that time on, it was the common designation for the work in New Testament manuscripts and in the writings of Christians.<sup>16</sup> That the superscription existed and

15. Nearly every translator understands ΤΙΠΟΣ ΕΒΡΑΙΟΥΣ to mean “To (the) Hebrews.” However, B. P. W. Stather Hunt proposes that ΤΙΠΟΣ ΕΒΡΑΙΟΥΣ is best understood to mean *against* the Hebrews. “Could there be a more appropriate title than ΤΙΠΟΣ ΕΒΡΑΙΟΥΣ for a treatise of which the primary object was to set forth the thesis that the Jewish law has been superseded by the Christian because it was only ‘a shadow of good things to come’; that the old covenant had been supplanted by a new one; that the old priesthood was abolished and that the old sacrifices had come to an end for ever? How better could such a treatise be described than as one *against* Judaism, *Adversus Iudaeos*?” Hunt 1951: 292. See also Synge 1959: 44.

16. See Metzger 1998: 607. For early Christian works see Pantaenus (Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.* 5:26.1); Clement of Alexandria (Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.* 6.14.2–4); Irenaeus (Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.* 5:26); Origin (Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.* 6.25.11–14); Eusebius (*Eccl. Hist.* 2.17.12; 3.3.5; 3.38.1–2; 6.20.3); Tertullian (*On Modesty* 20).

became the popular “title” for the writing is without question. However, how the superscription originated is not known. Craig Koester explains that, “the title was almost certainly not part of the earliest text of Hebrews, since letter writers often identified their intended audience in salutations, whereas superscriptions were added later when a number of writings were put into a single collection.”<sup>17</sup> F. F. Bruce adds the popular opinion that, “it very well may be that when, in the course of the second century, the work was included in the Pauline corpus, the editor gave it this title by analogy with ‘To (the) Romans,’ etc.”<sup>18</sup>

Independent of the question of the origin of the superscription is another important question. What is meant by the term “Hebrews?” While the answer to this question is again unknown, most believe that it reflects the impression that the addressees were “Jewish Christians.” However, even this assumption lends itself to a variety of hypotheses. For example, Hebrews may be understood to be synonymous with “Jews.” Holders of this view argue that both the Masoretic Text and Septuagint use Hebrews as a designation that is virtually synonymous with “Jews” or “Judaism.” This use of Hebrews may also be seen as a contrast to Greeks or “Gentiles” (cf. 2 Cor 11:22; Phil 3:5). For others, Hebrews is understood to be in opposition to Hellenists (cf. Acts 6:1). In this case, Hebrews indicates Hebrew or Aramaic speaking “Jews” from Palestine, rather than “Jews” of the Diaspora, or the Hellenistic world.<sup>19</sup> Still others understand Hebrews to indicate loyalty to traditional “Jewish” values. Matthew Black explains that Hebrews, “came to be employed increasingly to describe loyal Jews, especially in the Maccabaeian period, who displayed the traditional virtues of the patriarchal forefathers.”<sup>20</sup> Graham Harvey offers a possible example of this use of Hebrews in the New Testament. “When Paul writes that he is a ‘Hebrew of the Hebrews’ (Phil 3:5) he is denying that he is innovative

17. C. Koester 2001: 171. Compare the titles with the addressees identified in the salutations of Romans, 1–2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philemon, Colossians, 1–2 Thessalonians, 1–2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. Also note that many significant manuscripts of Ephesians do not identify the intended audience in the salutation of the letter.

18. Compare ΠΡΟΣ ΕΒΡΑΙΟΥΣ with: ΠΡΟΣ ΡΩΜΑΙΟΥΣ, ΠΡΟΣ ΚΟΡΙΝΘΙΟΥΣ, ΠΡΟΣ ΓΑΛΑΤΑΣ, ΠΡΟΣ ΕΦΕΣΙΟΥΣ, ΠΡΟΣ ΦΙΛΙΠΠΗΣΙΟΥΣ, ΠΡΟΣ ΚΟΛΟΣΣΑΕΙΣ, ΠΡΟΣ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΕΙΣ, ΠΡΟΣ ΤΙΜΟΘΕΟΝ, ΠΡΟΣ ΤΙΤΟΝ, and ΠΡΟΣ ΦΙΛΗΜΟΝΑ. See Bruce 1990: 3–4.

19. For an early example of this argument, see Delitzsch 1868: 20–21. For a more recent example, see Hengel 1983: 1–29.

20. Black 1983: 79.