

DEREK SPEARS

# Classical Quotations and Allusions in Early Christian Literature

*Studien und Texte zu  
Antike und Christentum*

147

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**Mohr Siebeck**

# Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum

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Mohr Siebeck

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## Preface

The work of researching and writing this study has been a voyage of discovery, and I wish to dedicate it to those who enabled me to undertake this voyage of exploration.

To my parents, Rita and Nigel Spears; my father for encouraging me to apply to Oxford as a student and my mother for making the request that changed my life, “My son would like to learn Greek.”

To my teacher at school, Harry Neill, who first aroused and nurtured my love for the classics.

To Peter Brown, my tutor at Trinity College, who widened my horizons, instilled in me the practices that have governed and underpinned this study, and whose enthusiasm for the work of Menander begot the genesis of the thesis – for which I am forever grateful. His support and encouragement as I applied to undertake the thesis were invaluable and his willingness to write a reference in support of my application was probably decisive.

To Leslie Houlden my chaplain at Trinity and later tutor and theological college Principal, who encouraged a questing and open spirit to the writings of the New Testament and the early church.

I am grateful to all who have helped me in so many ways, too many to mention, but especially I must thank: The Revd. Judi Hattaway who first suggested I undertake the thesis, which became the *fons et origo* of this study and whose persistence in encouraging me to send in the application could not be gainsaid. My sister, Mrs. June Armstrong, and Mrs. Helen Burt for proofreading the main text at an early stage and for many helpful suggestions. My brother-in-law, Professor Cecil Armstrong, for help with technical and layout matters. Professor Laurence Harwood for helping me create order out of the chaos of the original version of the bibliography. Dr. Bradley Marsh for help with Syriac manuscripts. The librarians of the Bodleian Library, and the librarians of Trinity, Christ Church and Balliol for help with early editions of the NT, and of New College for access to Syriac manuscripts. My college, Blackfriars, for support and fellowship, and especially Doctor Claire Broome-Saunders.

My greatest debt must be to my supervisor, Professor Mark Edwards, who was more than willing to undertake the supervision of one who had little chance or opportunity to pursue academic studies until retirement, and who needed to re-immense himself in the fields of theology and classics. Professor Edwards

guided me with exemplary care and assiduity, suggesting interesting areas of fresh research, enabling me to see the essence of the project, to cut and prune where necessary, challenging and pushing me to keep exploring different paths and approaches. It helped that his knowledge of theology (the NT and the early church) and the classics was encyclopaedic – and the remark, “You have read X or Z?” to which I replied, “No, but I will,” was often the prompt for fruitful research. At times I could not help feeling that the resulting work might have been better if he had written it himself. It was a challenging subject; little work, surprisingly, has been done on the subject and there is a corresponding lack of secondary literature, but Professor Edwards gave me unstinting support and encouragement to guide the work successfully to its conclusion.

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## List of Abbreviations

|            |                                                                                        |
|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| AB         | Anchor Bible                                                                           |
| AJP        | <i>American Journal of Philology</i>                                                   |
| ANTC       | Abingdon New Testament Commentaries                                                    |
| ANTF       | Arbeiten zur neutestamentlichen Textforschung                                          |
| AV         | Authorized Version                                                                     |
| BECNT      | Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament                                       |
| BHT        | Beiträge zur historischen Theologie                                                    |
| <i>Bib</i> | <i>Biblica</i>                                                                         |
| BNJ        | <i>Brill's New Jacoby</i>                                                              |
| BNP        | <i>Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World</i>                           |
| BNTC       | Black's New Testament Commentaries                                                     |
| BZNW       | Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft                        |
| CBQ        | <i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>                                                     |
| CCTC       | Cambridge Classical Texts and Commentaries                                             |
| ClQ        | <i>Classical Quarterly</i>                                                             |
| col.       | column                                                                                 |
| CP         | <i>Classical Philology</i>                                                             |
| FC         | <i>Fathers of the Church</i>                                                           |
| FGrHist    | <i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i>                                       |
| FHG        | <i>Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum</i>                                                |
| frag(s).   | fragment(s)                                                                            |
| FV         | <i>Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker</i>                                                 |
| GCS        | Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten [drei] Jahrhunderte            |
| GR         | <i>Greece and Rome</i>                                                                 |
| GRBS       | <i>Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies</i>                                             |
| HSCP       | <i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>                                          |
| HDR        | Harvard Dissertations in Religion                                                      |
| HTR        | <i>Harvard Theological Review</i>                                                      |
| HUT        | Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie                                            |
| ICC        | International Critical Commentary                                                      |
| JBL        | <i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>                                                  |
| J ECS      | <i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>                                              |
| JEH        | <i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>                                               |
| JNES       | <i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>                                                 |
| JRS        | <i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>                                                        |
| JSJ        | <i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods</i> |
| JSNT       | <i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>                                      |
| JTS        | <i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>                                                  |

|                  |                                                                                                                                                       |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| LCL              | Loeb Classical Library                                                                                                                                |
| LNTS             | The Library of New Testament Studies                                                                                                                  |
| LSJ              | Liddell, Henry George, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> . 9th ed. with revised supplement.<br>Oxford: Clarendon, 1996 |
| LXX              | Septuagint                                                                                                                                            |
| MS(S)            | manuscript(s)                                                                                                                                         |
| MT               | Masoretic Text                                                                                                                                        |
| NA <sup>28</sup> | <i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> , Nestle-Aland, 28th ed.                                                                                              |
| NICNT            | New International Commentary on the New Testament                                                                                                     |
| NIGTC            | New International Greek Testament Commentary                                                                                                          |
| NIV              | New International Version                                                                                                                             |
| no.              | number                                                                                                                                                |
| <i>NovT</i>      | <i>Novum Testamentum</i>                                                                                                                              |
| NovTSup          | Supplements to Novum Testamentum                                                                                                                      |
| n.s.             | new series                                                                                                                                            |
| NRSV             | New Revised Standard Version                                                                                                                          |
| NT               | New Testament                                                                                                                                         |
| NTG              | New Testament Guides                                                                                                                                  |
| OECT             | Oxford Early Christian Texts                                                                                                                          |
| OG               | Old Greek                                                                                                                                             |
| OT               | Old Testament                                                                                                                                         |
| pap.             | papyrus                                                                                                                                               |
| <i>PCG</i>       | <i>Poetae Comici Graeci</i>                                                                                                                           |
| PG               | Patrologia Graeca                                                                                                                                     |
| PhA              | Philosophia Antiqua                                                                                                                                   |
| PNTC             | Pelican New Testament Commentaries                                                                                                                    |
| PVTG             | Pseudepigrapha Veteris Testamenti Graece                                                                                                              |
| <i>REA</i>       | <i>Revue des études anciennes</i>                                                                                                                     |
| <i>REG</i>       | <i>Revue des études grecques</i>                                                                                                                      |
| <i>RSR</i>       | <i>Recherches de science religieuse</i>                                                                                                               |
| RSV              | Revised Standard Version                                                                                                                              |
| SBL              | Society of Biblical Literature                                                                                                                        |
| SC               | Sources chrétiennes. Paris: Cerf, 1943–                                                                                                               |
| <i>SH</i>        | <i>Supplementum Hellenisticum: Texte und Kommentare</i>                                                                                               |
| <i>SPhiloA</i>   | <i>Studia Philonica Annual</i>                                                                                                                        |
| StPatr           | Studia Patristica                                                                                                                                     |
| SNTSMS           | Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series                                                                                                    |
| SP               | Sacra Pagina                                                                                                                                          |
| STAC             | Studies and Texts in Antiquity and Christianity                                                                                                       |
| <i>SVF</i>       | <i>Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta: Zeno, Chrysippus, and Cleanthes</i>                                                                                   |
| Test.            | Testimonium, testimonia                                                                                                                               |
| <i>TGF</i>       | <i>Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta</i>                                                                                                                 |
| <i>TLG</i>       | <i>Thesaurus Linguae Graecae</i>                                                                                                                      |
| TNTC             | Tyndale New Testament Commentaries                                                                                                                    |
| TUGAL            | Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur                                                                                 |
| VC               | <i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>                                                                                                                           |
| VCSup            | <i>Vigiliae Christianae Supplements</i>                                                                                                               |

|      |                                                                                            |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| WBC  | Word Biblical Commentary                                                                   |
| WUNT | Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament                                       |
| ZAC  | <i>Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum</i>                                                 |
| ZNW  | <i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i> |
| ZPE  | <i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>                                          |



## Chapter 1

### Introduction

The genesis of this study began when, as an undergraduate, my tutor, Peter Brown, stirred my interest in Menander, leading to a fascination with Paul's quotation of an iambic trimeter in 1 Cor 15:33, φθείρουσιν ἡθὴ χρηστὰ ὁμιλῖαι κακαί,<sup>1</sup> traditionally ascribed to *Thais* of Menander, though Paul's text bears no attribution. In Kassel and Austin's edition of the fragments of the Greek comic poets,<sup>2</sup> this line is one of eight fragments surviving from the play. The longest quotation is four lines from the prologue quoted by Plutarch<sup>3</sup> followed by Aelius Dionysius (in his *Ἀπτικά ὀνόματα*)<sup>4</sup> who quotes just over two iambic trimeters. As I investigated further, during an all too brief sabbatical, it soon became obvious that the history of the line was considerably more complicated than many of the commentaries on this passage assumed. It was only on retirement that a friend suggested I take up the subject again. But by this time my interest had widened – not just to the exploration of the history of this line and the two other classical quotations in the Pauline literature<sup>5</sup> – but now to include the interplay between classical literature and the early church from the period of the New Testament through the works of Justin Martyr, the first to employ classical quotations named by author and allusions, to Clement, the father who quotes classical literature with the greatest depth.

The study begins from a narrow base; there are only three certain quotations in the NT of the Greek classics: Acts 17:28 (Aratus), 1 Cor 15:33 (Euripides/Menander), and Titus 1:12 (Epimenides). In the works of the post-Apostolic Fathers, there are hardly any traces, if at all, of the interaction of classical literature with the nascent church, and it is only with the first comparatively tentative steps in the writings of Justin that we begin to see a deepening engagement

---

<sup>1</sup> All the MSS of the NT give this line without elision. Clement, though later, often omits elision in citing verse. Several early editions (such as Stephanus's *Editio Regia* and an edition after Courcellaeus and Mills, published by Wettstein in 1735 at Amsterdam) make the elision less on manuscript authority than the younger Estienne correcting a presumed metrical fault. The authority of the *Editio Regia* – where the elision is printed – was probably the reason for subsequent editions following suit, though the edition of Wettstein in 1752–1753 makes plain his doubts as to the accuracy of the reading.

<sup>2</sup> PCG 6.2, frag. 165.9.

<sup>3</sup> *De audiendis poetis* (*Quomodo adolescens poetas audire debeat*), 19A.

<sup>4</sup> Alpha.16.16; also quoted later by Photius, who derived his knowledge from Aelius Dionysius.

<sup>5</sup> Acts 17:28 and Titus 1:12.

with classical literature. This trend continues through the works of writers in the second half of the second century CE culminating in the oeuvre of Clement, who may well be compared with Plutarch in his breadth of quotations. After Clement there is something of a reaction; Origen, though having a good classical knowledge, rarely, if ever, names authors alluded to in his works with the exception of *Contra Celsum*.

In the interaction between the church and the society in which it found itself, greater attention has been given by scholars to the role of philosophy than that of literature; yet a knowledge of literature was equally regarded as the sign of an educated, cultivated man, perhaps in some ways even more so. The major purpose of this study is to explore this interaction and what it implies about the church's growth. The use of classical literature may also tell us something of the background of the writers and the hypothetical place that *florilegia* may have played in the acquisition of such knowledge, especially in the case of the apologists and Clement.

## 1.1 Principles – Biblical Matters

When discussing the books of the NT, I will assume, though using the traditional names, that all the books of the NT are anonymous. The one exception is the Pauline Letters – the Pastoral Letters (1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus), 2 Thessalonians, and Ephesians are certainly pseudonymous; and the remainder (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon) are genuine. The one exception is the letter to the Colossians;<sup>6</sup> the names mentioned in the letter seem to tie this epistle very closely to Philemon, yet there are elements particularly in the first two chapters, such as the understanding of ἐκκλησία, that may seem non-Pauline.

For many of the writers of the NT, the sub-apostolic generation, the apologists and their successors up to the time of Jerome,<sup>7</sup> the version of the Old Testament that they used and with which they were most familiar was the Septuagint (LXX).<sup>8</sup> To give one example, but an important one, in *Protrepticus*, Clement

<sup>6</sup> A trenchant discussion giving the arguments both for genuineness and pseudonymity can be found in J.M.G. Barclay, *Colossians and Philemon* (London: T&T Clark, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> Born circa 342–343 CE; died 420 CE.

<sup>8</sup> Technically the title “Septuagint” applies to the first five books of the OT canon (the Torah), but for ease of reference, in this study the subsequent translation of the remaining books will also be termed the “LXX.” Though the abbreviations “LXX/OG” and “OG” (Old Greek) are used in scholarly work on the Septuagint, the abbreviation “LXX” is probably still more familiar in wider circles.

quotes the OT<sup>9</sup> 302 times.<sup>10</sup> Of these quotations, 194 reproduce the text of the LXX<sup>11</sup> exactly or with very minor variations;<sup>12</sup> the remaining 108 quotations are not as textually exact – this is just as likely, if not more so, to be the result of Clement’s technique in quotation than variation in the text of the LXX. His practice still attests to the importance of the LXX as their source and that it was indeed Clement’s OT just as it was for the ante-Nicene fathers. In this study, all quotations from the OT will be taken from the LXX, as the prime version of the OT in the first four centuries in Christian circles.<sup>13</sup>

In quoting texts from the OT, particularly in the sections devoted to the apologists and Clement, the practice will be to refer to passages quoted from the Testaments as “biblical” texts. When these authors were writing, the formal concept of a NT canon, first exemplified in Athanasius’s thirty-ninth pastoral letter (367 CE) was still far distant. The nature of the canon of the Greek OT is considerably more nebulous. Though the hypothesis of the Council of Jamnia (circa 85 CE), believed to be instrumental in defining the Hebrew canon, is now generally discounted,<sup>14</sup> it seems apparent from a passage in Josephus’s *Contra Apionem*<sup>15</sup> that the canon was already closed by the end of the first century CE. In contradistinction the emerging church was less driven to define the books of the LXX as canonical. They had authority but not yet canonicity. The obvious word to

<sup>9</sup> These include books such as *Siracides* (*Ecclesiasticus*), which were in the Greek “canon” but not the Hebrew.

<sup>10</sup> There are also seven further allusions that cannot be classified as quotations.

<sup>11</sup> The edition of the LXX used in this study is that of A. Rahlfs and R. Hanhart, eds., *Septuaginta*, editio altera (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006).

<sup>12</sup> The minor variations in the first list are typically omissions of particles such as καὶ and δὲ. The variations in the second list include word order, synonyms, and readings that may reflect a different manuscript tradition.

<sup>13</sup> Any significant variations from the Masoretic Text will be noted if they are relevant to the argument. Though other Greek translations, such as those of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, preserved such as they are though the labours of Origen in the *Hexapla*, have left traces of use in variant readings, the overwhelming impression is that the LXX is the preferred source for the church in the Greek East for the centuries covered in this study. This is confirmed by T. M. Law when he writes: “The Septuagint stands at the heart of the early church. Except for a small number of Christians in the Syriac church, every Christian who heard or read the Bible in the first few centuries of the Christian era would have heard the text of the Septuagint or of its translation in the Old Latin version in the languages of the East.” *When God Spoke Greek: The Septuagint and the Making of the Christian Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 139.

<sup>14</sup> “This expression distorts the character of the discussions recorded in the *Mishnah*,” which rather point to “uncertainty about the limits of the third scriptural division, the Writings.” J. Barton, *Oracles of God: Perceptions of Ancient Prophecy in Israel after the Exile*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 24.

<sup>15</sup> Josephus, *Contra Apionem*, 1.37–43, in particular; δύο δὲ μόνα πρὸς τοῖς εἴκοσι βιβλία τοῦ παντὸς ἔχοντα χρόνου τὴν ἀναγραφὴν, τὰ δικαίως πεπιστευμένα, Barton, *Oracles of God*, 26–27. (Josephus’s account of twenty-two books conflicts with latter Rabbinical tradition with twenty-four, but it is possible that Ruth was subsumed in Judges and Lamentations in Jeremiah.)

have used in this context might have been “scripture” but as Law points out,<sup>16</sup> scripture and canonicity are often confused today, though two distinct concepts. To avoid this potential confusion, “biblical texts” will denote quotations from the books of the OT and NT up to the latter years of the fourth century CE (i.e., before 367 CE), and “canonical texts” will denote quotations from the Testaments by authors writing in the years following this first attempt to define a canon.

This study will also take as one of its basic principles that the NT is a collection of first and second-century CE texts, similar to those of Strabo (earlier in the period), Philo, Josephus, Musonius Rufus, and Plutarch (later in the period). Fergus Millar in his address to the Classical Association in 1993 argued powerfully that, inter alia, such texts as the LXX, the two books of Maccabees, the NT ought to be studied in the context of classical literature of the same period.<sup>17</sup> It was, perhaps, an inevitable consequence of the establishment of the canon that the NT was seen in a different category; indeed, it was almost hermetically sealed off from other contemporary literature. (This may have happened later in the West, dependent as it was on the first publication of the Greek NT by Erasmus in 1516.) The NT was seen as the province of theologians and biblical scholars, and though a Greek text, it was rarely, if ever, studied as a text per se at the university level by classicists.<sup>18</sup> The first NT text to be prescribed in *Literae Humaniores* at Oxford was the Acts of the Apostles in 1968.<sup>19</sup>

The nineteenth century saw the production of several NT grammars such as those of Winer<sup>20</sup> and Moulton.<sup>21</sup> Though works of considerable and immense scholarship, which drew on a vast conspectus of Greek literature and dialects, they, perhaps unwittingly, gave the impression that the NT existed in isolation from other contemporary Greek texts. The opening of the Winer grammar in the translation by Moulton also gives a hint of the difficulties that faced those engaged on a such a project in the nineteenth century;<sup>22</sup> the Jewish

<sup>16</sup> Law, *When God Spoke Greek*, 139.

<sup>17</sup> Reprinted in F. Millar, *The Roman Republic and the Augustan Revolution*, vol. 1 of *Rome, The Greek World, and the East*, ed. H. M. Cotton and G. M. Rogers (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

<sup>18</sup> The examples, for the sake of brevity, are taken from the British Isles, but mutatis mutandis, may be equally true of continental Europe.

<sup>19</sup> University of Oxford, *Examination Statutes Revised to the End of Trinity Term 1968* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968).

<sup>20</sup> G. B. Winer and W. F. Moulton, trans. and eds., *A Treatise on the Grammar of New Testament Greek: Regarded as a Sure Basis for New Testament Exegesis*, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: Clark, 1882).

<sup>21</sup> J. H. Moulton and W. F. Howard, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1906).

<sup>22</sup> “As the language in which the NT is written is a variety of Greek, the proper object of a NT grammar would be fully accomplished by a systematic grammatical comparison of the NT language with the written Greek of the same age and of the same description. As however, this later Greek itself has not yet been fully examined as a whole, and as NT Greek displays in

Hellenic authors quoted are Aristeeas, Philo, and Josephus as well as the LXX. The preponderance of authors quoted are still those of the classical tradition from Homer onwards; of the fifty-seven authors before the NT era, thirty-one were active in the period up to 300 BCE.

## 1.2 Principles – Quotation, Allusion and Limits of the Study

As this study will be predicated on the occurrence of references to classical literature in Christian texts, it is necessary to lay down some basic principles. The use of the word “text” is both a reminder that the quotations and many of the allusions will derive from written texts, but also because some writers, without quoting, will name a work, such as a Platonic dialogue, or part of a work of ancient literature, either surviving or lost. But the main thrust of the study falls on quotations and allusions, giving the study an important philological basis. Relatively little work has been done on this aspect of many early Christian texts, as will be highlighted throughout the study, with an attendant lack of secondary literature.

By use of the term “quotation,” it is meant a passage of three, four, or more words cited from an ancient literary source. (Smaller quotations may be found, but they will in all probability depend on a rare or unusual word to identify them.) Quotations were often made from memory – ancient scrolls were not the most user-friendly, without the benefit of modern punctuation – and prose texts, lacking the aid of metre, were more likely to vary from their original source.<sup>23</sup> Quotations will thus imply the possibility that the quoter has a familiarity with the original text or else a work in which the text has been quoted. They are thus a strong pointer to the cultural, literary, and educational background of the writer. Though the early stages of the *paideia enkyklios* were founded on the copying of lines from Homer<sup>24</sup> and the dramatic poets, chiefly Euripides and Menander, lines mainly of a gnomic quality, that does not necessarily guarantee a full knowledge of the parent work, especially as the lines, as for example in the *Sententiae Menandri*, were cut free from their original context. This will have come with further reading and study, in all probability the third stage of the *paideia enkyklios*, and may well indicate a social status (i.e., the “elite”) where such an accomplishment was assumed. In this study Plutarch and Clement, from

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general the influence of a foreign tongue, (the Hebrew-Aramean), NT grammar must take a proportionally wider range and investigate scientifically the laws according to which the Jewish writers of the NT wrote the Greek of their time.” Winer and Moulton, *Treatise on the Grammar*, 2.

<sup>23</sup> A good example would be the quotations from Musonius in the second *Paedagogus* of Clement.

<sup>24</sup> This will not necessarily imply a wider knowledge of the Homeric text.

pagan and Christian backgrounds, would be good examples. Quotation as an adornment seems notably absent from the papyri letters that have survived from ancient Egypt. As will be argued later in the study, the art of quotation started in the fourth century BCE; it may well imply the growth of a literary canon as the first quotations were mainly drawn from Homer and the fifth-century dramatic poets.<sup>25</sup> Thus the use and frequency of quotation in Christian literature may be a possible indicator of the educational background of the writer but also a growth in conversion and influence in Christian circles of that section of society who, in educational terms, might be perceived as the “elite.”

Allusions in this study display a variety of forms. In some instances, there may be no direct quotation of a preexistent text but rather words that will indicate a knowledge of the passage, one which has been reframed by the author concerned. “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son” is a quotation, but “the giving love of God for his creation” might rather be an allusion. In many ways allusions might be said to resemble the *testimonia* employed by editors in the editions of lost authors, gathering up the references to the writers in the surviving literature; they are a witness to the knowledge that other ancient writers had of their life and work. Allusions thus afford a knowledge of contemporary culture or literary ambience; such would be the references to pagan gods in Aristides’s *Apology* or the references to female poets in Tatian’s *Oratio*. They may well derive from oral sources – as in the case of Aristides’s work – or as in the case of Tatian from literary sources, still surviving or lost. Allusions<sup>26</sup> may be literary,<sup>27</sup> historical,<sup>28</sup> philosophical,<sup>29</sup> or religious.<sup>30</sup> In some cases, such as that of Tatian and Tertullian, allusions may provide more knowledge about their awareness of the classical heritage than their use of direct quotations. No ancient theorists appear to have attempted an analysis of allusions, or indeed quotations, and their modern counterparts seem not much more enthusiastic, as Pasco<sup>31</sup> in his study of allusions in French writers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries wryly notes;

<sup>25</sup> The first and second centuries CE saw an increase in works employing quotations.

<sup>26</sup> Examples are drawn from *Ad Autolycum*; Theophilus is probably the least “learned” of the writers of the latter half of the second century CE.

<sup>27</sup> Theophilus, *Ad Autolycum* 2.13: Τὸ δὲ εἰπεῖν Ἡσίοδον τὸν ποιητὴν ἐκ Χάους γεγενῆσθαι Ἑρβος καὶ τὴν Γῆν καὶ Ἑρῶτα.

<sup>28</sup> Theophilus, *Ad Autolycum* 3.27: Κύρου οὖν βασιλεύσαντος ἔτεσιν κη’ καὶ ἀναιρεθέντος ὑπὸ Τομύριδος ἐν Μασσαγετίᾳ. This allusion derives from Herodotus, *Historiae* 1.214, but how it came to Theophilus we cannot tell.

<sup>29</sup> Theophilus, *Ad Autolycum* 3.17: Δεῖ οὖν μᾶλλον μαθητὴν γενέσθαι τῆς νομοθεσίας τοῦ θεοῦ, καθὼς καὶ αὐτὸς ὡμολόγηκεν ἄλλως μὴ δύνασθαι τὸ ἀκριβὲς μαθεῖν, ἐὰν μὴ ὁ θεὸς διδάξῃ διὰ τοῦ νόμου. This allusion derives from Plato’s *Meno* 99E, but again we cannot be certain how it came to Theophilus’s attention.

<sup>30</sup> Theophilus, *Ad Autolycum* 3.9: Τούτου μὲν οὖν τοῦ θείου νόμου διάκονος γεγένηται Μωσῆς, καὶ θεραπόντων τοῦ θεοῦ, παντὶ μὲν τῷ κόσμῳ, παντελῶς δὲ τοῖς Ἑβραίοις, τοῖς καὶ Ἰουδαίοις καλούμενοις. This allusion derives from several passages in the LXX.

<sup>31</sup> A. H. Pasco, *Allusion: A Literary Graft* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994).

“Very little attention has been paid to the way it works.”<sup>32</sup> In another work<sup>33</sup> we find the following in an article on allusion “a brief, indirect, and deliberate reference – in a poem or other medium – to a person, place, event (fictitious or actual), or other work of art, allusion may be used by its author to enhance a work’s semantic and cultural density, topicality, or timelessness. Despite its etymology, allusion need not be playful but does require that the audience recognize the borrowed reference.” Pasco also notes, “I insist upon function, since allusion is not a genre, but is rather a mode, a strategy, a device that occurs in all genres.”<sup>34</sup> In another work the writer of the article on allusion (E. Miner) in the *New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* affirms allusion as “a poet’s deliberate incorporation of identifiable elements from other sources, preceding or contemporaneous, textual or extratextual. ... It usually presumes a close relation between poet and audience, a social emphasis, a community of knowledge and a prizing of tradition. It is probably fair to assume that its manifestations in history and culture are extremely varied. Only a hundred years ago, a poet could assume that a reader would recognize the phrase “through a glass darkly” as a biblical allusion, but few would deny the lesser likelihood of this familiarity today.” *Mutatis mutandis* many of these principles and suggestions may underlie the use of allusions in the authors discussed in this study. Though such an approach may underline all the Christian writers of the second half of the second century CE, it may be seen perhaps most clearly in the works of Tatian and Tertullian.

Thus, the exploration of the cultural background of the first two Christian centuries is founded on quotations and allusions appearing in the writings of that period – echoing the famous phrase “Avez-vous un texte?” often attributed to the nineteenth-century French historian Numa-Denys de Coulanges.<sup>35</sup>

It would have been fascinating to have pursued further other scholarly work, using inferences presumed from the text but not necessarily directly based on them, such as MacDonald’s<sup>36</sup> use of mimesis theory in perceiving the work of some pagan writers, for example Homer, Vergil,<sup>37</sup> Plato, and Euripides, lying behind the formation of some writings in the NT canon. Mimesis theory has

<sup>32</sup> Pasco, *Allusion*, 6.

<sup>33</sup> R. Wetzsteon, “Allusion,” in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. R. Greene and S. Cushman, 4th ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 42.

<sup>34</sup> Pasco, *Allusion*, 6.

<sup>35</sup> G.A. Highet, *The Classical Tradition: Greek and Roman Influences on Western Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948; repr. 2015).

<sup>36</sup> D.R. MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); D.R. MacDonald, *Luke and Vergil: Imitations of Classical Greek Literature*, vol. 2 of *The New Testament and Greek Literature* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015); D.R. MacDonald, *The Dionysian Gospel: The Fourth Gospel and Euripides* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017).

<sup>37</sup> It must be admitted that the lack of references to Vergil in surviving ancient Greek literature – only six or so in *TLG* – and the perception in Plutarch and Clement that literature was primarily Greek, may well question the depth of Luke’s knowledge of Vergil.

been effectively used in the exploration of works such as Vergil's *Aeneid* and its relationship to the Homeric poems, or that of the *Electra* plays of Sophocles and Euripides to the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus, and in particular the *Choephoroi*. MacDonald's work is based on a variant of the mimesis theory,<sup>38</sup> which draws attention to similarities in the narratives of the works, under scrutiny, as, for example, in the Gospel of Mark, the *Odyssey* and part of the *Iliad*, though Mark's knowledge of Homer certainly cannot be assumed as readily as we assume Vergil's knowledge of Homer.

It might have strengthened MacDonald's position if he had examined in greater detail the background to the knowledge of the Homeric epics in the diaspora and Judaea itself<sup>39</sup> in the three centuries preceding the composition of Mark's Gospel. The Homeric epics seem to have been known in the diaspora – they are cited by Philo – and writers such as Theodotus<sup>40</sup> and Philo Epicus<sup>41</sup> composed works on Jewish themes, in a form of Homeric pastiche, borrowing dialect and vocabulary. This stance, typical of the diaspora, was probably not followed in the heartland of the Jewish faith – Judaea. Rajak<sup>42</sup> has observed that in all probability Josephus did not acquire his knowledge of the Homeric corpus until he became a client of the Flavians. Although Greek was undoubtedly spoken and used in Judaea – it is attested on inscriptions in Jerusalem – it is highly improbable that the methods of the *paideia enkyklios* were used, if at all, in Jerusalem and its

<sup>38</sup> His work has attracted both a positive response such as Thomas E. Phillips, review of *The Gospels and Homer: Imitations of Greek Epic in Mark and Luke-Acts*, by Dennis R. MacDonald, *The New Testament and Greek Literature* 1, *Religious Studies Review* 42.2 (2016): 109; as well as a more negative one, Karl Olav Sandnes, "Imitatio Homeri? An Appraisal of Dennis R. MacDonald's 'Mimesis Criticism,'" *JBL* 124.4 (2005): 715–32.

<sup>39</sup> Equally it might have been profitable to examine the style of Mark's Gospel as to whether it was compatible with the level of education implied in the knowledge of the Homeric epics MacDonald presupposes. His remark, "Few scholars know Homeric epics as well as the average ancient Greek reader" may be over optimistic and unrealistic (*Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark*, 171). Though much of the early stages of the *paideia enkyklios* consisted in copying lines of Homer, in-depth knowledge of the epics would be probably confined to the higher levels of the *paideia enkyklios*. The papyri letters from Egypt show little, if any, acquaintance with the Homeric epics and "average" will depend on social status and are also confined to those who were literate. More may well have been acquainted with the Homeric stories through oral transmission than through reading or study of the text. A possible parallel today might be knowledge of biblical stories, gained through oral transmission rather than through the reading of the Biblical texts.

<sup>40</sup> Three lines from Theodotus; frag. 758 in *SH*:

ἐνθεν δ' ἐξενέποιμεν, ὅθι πτόλιν ἦλυθ' Ἰακώβ  
εὐρείαν Σικίμων· ἐπὶ δ' ἀνδράσι τοῖσιν ἔτησιν  
ἄρχος Ἐμώρ σὺν παιδὶ Συχέμ, μάλ' ἀτειρέε φῶτε.

<sup>41</sup> Two and a half lines from Philo Epicus; frag. 681 (*SH*):

Ἀβραάμ κλυτοχέξ, ὑπέρτερον ἅμματι δεσμών,  
παμφαῆς ἐπλήμυρε μεγαυχίτοισι λογιμοῖς  
θειλῇ θέλγηθρα.

<sup>42</sup> T. Rajak, *Josephus: The Historian and His Society* (London: Duckworth, 1983).

surrounds. Knowledge of the Homeric poems was probably very circumscribed as Feldman<sup>43</sup> has argued. Further in Judaea the presence of the Olympian pantheon in the Homeric poems might have discouraged a wider dissemination, the deities of the poems being seen as δαιμόνια,<sup>44</sup> texts which were thereby seen as antithetical to the monotheism of Judaism. It is a possibility that such beliefs were current in Jewish circles and were adopted by the early church – Paul bears witness to them even if he did not necessarily share them. It is difficult to estimate if such beliefs had any effect on the reception of writings where the pagan gods played an important part; *argumenta ex silentio* are notoriously difficult to evaluate but the virtual absence of any quotations from classical literature, especially the Homeric epics, in Christian writings till the time of Justin might suggest that this was a possibility. As we know so little about Mark's background, whether he was of gentile origin, a proselyte, or of Jewish stock, it may be difficult to judge how such factors would have influenced the composition of his Gospel, but the investigation might have been worthwhile. The present work, as an empirical inquiry into Christian knowledge of pagan literature, may be seen as a necessary complement, or desirable preliminary, to such speculative exercises as that of MacDonald. Constraints of space forbid it to go beyond the written evidence of quotations and allusions in Christian writers of the first two centuries. This work, because of the limits of space, has perforce limited itself to those quotations and allusions, that is written evidence, in the surviving works of Christian writers of this period. To have pursued further would lie outside the bounds of the planned study.

### 1.3 Principles – Perceptions of the Classics

It was also inevitable that universities would concentrate on the classics of Greek literature; the Examination Statutes of Oxford in the 1880s prescribe for (1) *Litterae Humaniores*: Homer; Demosthenes's *De corona*; Aeschylus's *Oresteia* or any four plays including *Agamemnon*; Sophocles – any three plays; Euripides – four from a prescribed list; Aristophanes – three from a prescribed list; Theocritus, Pindar's *Olympian* and *Pythian Odes*; Plato's *Apology*, *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus* or *Protagoras*; Thucydides's *Book I, II, III* or *II, III, IV*; (2) for Greats, historical

<sup>43</sup> L. H. Feldman, *Judaism and Hellenism Reconsidered* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

<sup>44</sup> Note Ps 95 LXX, ὅτι πάντες οἱ θεοὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν δαιμόνια. Though the word δαίμων has several meanings, one of them was a semi-divine or spiritual being inferior to the gods; to Jews and Christians of the first century CE, it was a way for some to indicate the reality of the pagan gods. This view is attested to in the 1 Cor 10:20 – οὐ θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς κοινωνοὺς τῶν δαιμόνια γίνεσθαι. It is also reflected in the discussion of food offered to idols (ch 8) between the “strong” who deny the reality of the δαιμόνια and the “weak” who still believe in the existence of δαιμόνια.

texts: Herodotus; Thucydides; Xenophon's *Hellenica*, Demosthenes's *Olynthiacs*, *Philippics*, *De falsa legatione*, *De corona*; Plutarch's *Lives of the Gracchi*; and (3) for philosophy – Plato's *Republic*, *Protagoras*, *Phaedrus*, *Gorgias*, *Laws III*, *VII*, *X* and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, and *Politics*. With nothing later than the fourth century BCE (except for the Plutarch work above and Diodorus, Pausanias, and Strabo in certain special subjects), it was inevitable that the NT should be seen in isolation.<sup>45</sup> With the discovery of papyri in Egypt from the late nineteenth century onwards, the picture changed. Here was a body of literature and writings that seemed to share a similarity with the NT. Deissmann's *Light from the Ancient East* was highly influential in refocusing the NT in this new context. Inevitably there was reaction; many realised that the NT was on a higher level than much of the utilitarian literature found in the papyri. And yet there still remains a divide; the first edition of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (1999) only contains one article on a NT book, the Acts of the Apostles. This study takes as its premise that the NT and subsequent Christian documents must be treated as first- and second-century CE Greek and Latin texts above all. It is perhaps only in this context that they will fully reveal their theological riches.

Literature written in Greek starts with the Homeric epics, probably dated to the eighth century BCE, but when to determine the ending is more difficult, as works were still being written in Greek until the fall of Constantinople (1453 CE). Though the Eastern empire outlived the fall of the Western empire, conventionally dated with the deposition of Romulus Augustulus (476 CE), Christian writers outnumbered those from a pagan background from the fourth century CE onwards. The only significant pagan writers in the fourth century CE are Iamblichus, Julian, and Libanius. Even the period from Homer to the composition of the NT covers some seven hundred to eight hundred years, and within that period the Greek language changed. The most important factor was the spread of Koine Greek after the conquests of Alexander the Great, and though less witnessed in literary Greek of the period,<sup>46</sup> it is an important influence on the LXX and the NT and is also attested in the non-literary papyri of this period.<sup>47</sup>

The great age of Greek literature is the fifth to fourth centuries BCE. This is the literature, with the exception of the Homeric poems,<sup>48</sup> still most frequently

<sup>45</sup> I have illustrated this divide in terms of British universities for the sake of brevity – but it will equally apply to those countries, especially Germany, where classical studies were important and where the NT writings were being treated for the first time in a critical manner.

<sup>46</sup> It is arguable that Polybius and Plutarch may exhibit characteristics of written koine. G. Horrocks, *Greek: A History of the Language and Its Speakers* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

<sup>47</sup> On the rise and influence of koine, see L. R. Palmer, *The Greek Language* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), 191 ff. on the genesis of koine, and pg. 194 on the language of the NT; see also Horrocks, *Greek*, 32 ff. on koine as an extension of "Great Attic" and pp. 56 ff. on the role of the LXX in Koine Greek.

<sup>48</sup> The Homeric poems were the bedrock of the *paideia enkyklios*.

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