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This study focusses on the way the Letter to the Hebrews explains the Christian doctrine of salvation by means of sacrificial symbols drawn from the Old Testament. Theories about the nature of sacrifice are taken from the work of social anthropologists to show the underlying meaning of these symbols and how they affect the meaning of this text

In relating New Testament studies to the methods of the social sciences, this book differs from most writings about Hebrews, which are either historical studies of the letter's background or theological studies of the author's ideas. Dr Dunnill assesses Hebrews, not as an argument, but as an act of symbolic communication; he thus aims to identify some of its underlying structures and reveal the source of its power.

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THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS

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# Covenant and sacrifice in the Letter to the Hebrews

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## PREFACE

This book is a revised version of a doctoral thesis presented to the University of Birmingham in 1988. The research was conducted under the supervision of David Ford, and the final product owes a great deal to his searching questions, his patience and his endless encouragement. I am also extremely grateful to Frances Young, from whose wise guidance I have benefited at several stages, and to Leslie Houlden, Andrew Chester and the former editor of this series, Graham Stanton, who read the original version and made helpful comments from which I have tried to learn in making this revision.

Like any writing, this owes much to the communities in which its various stages have come into being: especially to the very lively Theology Department of Birmingham University, where the work was begun; to my former colleagues and students at Westminster College, Oxford, where the project broadened and put down some roots; to the Principal, staff and former fellow-students at Ripon College, Cuddesdon, who provided a very amenable atmosphere for theological writing; and finally to John Hall-Matthews and my colleagues and friends in the parish of St Paul's, Tupsley, Hereford, who have encouraged me to do this revision, helped me to think more clearly about its purpose and lightened my load of other work to make it possible.

The appearance of the work in this revised form is a belated tribute to my parents, Anne Dunnill and Leslie Dunnill, and to my aunt Elizabeth Stewart, who, among many other gifts of faith and life, did much to support me in the difficult early stages of research. I wish to record also my thanks to David Ravens, who first directed me towards theological study, and whose comments on early versions of this book stimulated further thought; to Alan Browning and Philip Budd, for their friendship and encouragement of this project at different times; and most of all to my wife Maggie who, inheriting this as 'work in progress', has helped me to believe both that it was worth doing, and that it should be finished.

## ABBREVIATIONS

### *Journals*

<i>ASR</i>	<i>American Sociology Review</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>ExpT</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>JAAR</i>	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JEH</i>	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
<i>JRH</i>	<i>Journal of Roman History</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

### *Books*

Douglas, <i>PD</i>	M. Douglas, <i>Purity and Danger</i> , London, 1966
Friedlander, <i>PRE</i>	G. Friedlander, ed. and trans., <i>Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer</i> , New York, 1965
Leach, <i>CC</i>	E. Leach, <i>Culture and Communication</i> , Cambridge, 1976
Lévi-Strauss, <i>SA</i>	C. Lévi-Strauss, <i>Structural Anthropology</i> , Harmondsworth, 1968
von Rad, <i>OTT</i>	G. von Rad, <i>Old Testament Theology</i> , London, 1975
de Vaux, <i>AI</i>	R. de Vaux, <i>Ancient Israel. Its Life and Institutions</i> , 2nd edn, London, 1965



*Abbreviations*

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Young, *SI* F. M. Young, *The Use of Sacrificial Ideas in Greek Christian Writers from the N.T. to John Chrysostom*, Philadelphia, 1979

*Texts*

Add. Est.	Additions to Esther
B. Pes.	Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Pesahim
B. San.	Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Sanhedrin
Ep. Barn.	Epistle of Barnabas
FT (P or V)	Fragment Targums (Paris (P) or Vatican (V) texts)
Gen. R.	Genesis Rabbah
Lev. R.	Leviticus Rabbah
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text of Hebrew Scriptures
Midr.	Midrash
Mish.	Mishnah
P. Az.	Prayer of Azariah
PRE	Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer
Tg. Ps-J.	Targum Pseudo-Jonathan

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## A NOTE ON TRANSLATIONS

Translations of Biblical passages are usually taken from the Revised Standard Version, although occasionally the New Revised Standard Version has been preferred. It will be clear in the text when it has been found necessary, especially in detailed discussions of passages from Hebrews, to amend these versions or to translate afresh from the Greek.