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ARTICLE I.

WAS THE APOSTLE PAUL THE AUTHOR OF THE EPISTLE
TO THE HEBREWS?

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Introductory Remarks.

THE Epistle to the Hebrews has met the fate of all anonymous productions in every age. We cannot wonder that its authorship has been much questioned in modern times, when even Shakspeare's Plays have been accused of illegitimacy, and the Iliad and Odyssey, instead of being allowed to claim the honor of descent from the blind old bard of Scio's rocky isle, have been compelled to be content with an origin from wandering minstrels or cyclic poets. If Junius still wanders like "Japhet in search of a Father," or, with less success than Electra in the play, is yet unable to discern a brother's locks among all its contemporaries, we cannot wonder that an anonymous writing of the first century of the Christian era, whose real or supposed author is not mentioned for a hundred years at least after it first appeared, has given occasion to some discussion in these latter ages, in which, if

a doubt should arise in reference to the foundation of the most costly structure, some hand would be found ruthless enough to undermine it in order to solve the doubt.

In tracing the history of the treatment of this Epistle in ages past, the greatest wonder is, that it should have been, with so little opposition, attributed to one author. The number who have *fully* denied its Pauline origin is certainly very few. And still fewer have been able to satisfy themselves who the author was, if not the apostle Paul. One has conjectured that Barnabas, another that the evangelist Luke, another that Apollos or Silvanus, wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews; but the arguments that have been adduced have been few and of little weight. The canonical authority of the Epistle does not necessarily depend upon the Pauline authorship, although the proof of both is, to a considerable extent, the same; hence some have doubtless felt that it was of comparatively little importance to determine who its author was. Still it cannot be denied that it lends additional interest to the book, if we can feel that it is the production of the great apostle; and especially do the arguments for the superiority of the Christian to the Jewish dispensation gain additional force in the words of him who was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and had been educated in all the strictness of the Jewish schools, and in the centre of Jewish influence.

It will not, we hope, be deemed inappropriate to ask the attention of the readers of the *Bibliotheca* once more to the arguments that may have a bearing upon the authorship of this epistle. Most of them have often been brought forward previously, and may be quite familiar to those who have paid special attention to the literature of the epistle; but still they must be repeated, at some length, in order to present the combined influence of the whole proof, which seems to us quite conclusive in favor of its Pauline authorship.

We shall naturally first give the external testimony in reference to the author of the epistle, and then the internal proofs, with such an examination of the objections which have been adduced as the limits of a Review Article will allow.

The Epistle in the Apostolic Age.

During the apostolic age there is no positive testimony in reference to the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Many, indeed, maintain that 2 Pet. 3 : 15, 16 is conclusive : " And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation ; even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you ; as also in all *his* epistles, speaking in them of these things ; in which are some things hard to be understood," etc. It cannot be doubted that there is a similarity of language and sentiment in the first clause of verse 16 to some passages in Hebrews ; as 6 : 12 ; 4 : 15, 16 ; 2 : 17, 18 ; 12 : 24, and we find, also, in Heb. 5 : 11, 12, a passage on which verse 16 may be based. Besides, Forster contends that Peter, in both his epistles, "is under great obligations to the Epistle to the Hebrews for peculiarities of thought and language." He uses "several remarkable words, peculiar to Hebrews and his own two epistles,"¹ and also uses them in connection with "other peculiar words belonging to St. Paul's unquestioned epistles,"² while "these verbal coincidences will be found to open out into coincidences of sentiment and reasoning on a more extended scale."³ Still there does not seem to be anything positive and distinguishing enough to warrant the

¹ ἄναξ, for example, applied to the death of Christ, *once* for all (1 Pet. 3 : 18 ; Heb. 9 : 26, 28) ; εἰσοδος, understood of the entrance of the faithful into Christ's kingdom and glory (2 Pet. 1 : 11 ; Heb. 10 : 19) ; ἀμύωτος, applied to designate Christ and Christ's inheritance (1 Pet. 1 : 4 ; Heb. 7 : 26) ; ἕμιμος, employed in the same peculiar sense and application (1 Pet. 1 : 19 ; Heb. 9 : 14). This decisive coincidence is unexampled elsewhere, throughout the New Testament ; συμπαθέης (1 Pet. 3 : 8) ; συμπαθέω (Heb. 4 : 15 ; 10 : 34) ; βαντισμός (1 Pet. 1 : 2 ; Heb. 12 : 24 ; cf. also, 9 : 13, 19, 21 ; 10 : 22) ; παρεπίδημος (1 Pet. 1 : 1 ; 2 : 11 ; Heb. 11 : 13). Forster's Apostolical Authority of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Sec. 14. p. 628.

² E. g., ἕμιμος, 1 Pet. 1 : 19, is coupled with ἄσπιλος (a word borrowed also by James), 1 Tim. 6 : 14 ; ἀμύωτος, again, 1 Pet. 1 : 4 is conjoined with the Pauline term ἐφάρατος (1 Cor. 9 : 25) ; παρεπίδημος (1 Pet. 2 : 11), with κάρικος (Eph. 2 : 19) ; while βαντισμός stands in connection (1 Pet. 1 : 2) with the Pauline word ἀγιασμός and with δακροή, the keystone of Romans, p. 628, 9.

³ On this point cf. 1 Pet. 1 : 1 ; 2 : 11, with Heb. 11 : 13, and Eph. 2 : 19 ; 1 Pet. 1 : 2, with Heb. 12 : 14, 24, and Heb. 9 : 13, 19, 20, 21, and 10 : 19, 22 ; 1 Pet. 1 : 9, 19—20, with Heb. 10 : 36, and Heb. 1 : 1 ; and 9 : 14, and various other passages quoted and commented upon by Forster, p. 629, sq.

confidence which Forster expresses upon this point. It merely amounts to a *probability*, not to a *certainty*.

Forster (p. 567) also finds incidental proof of the Pauline origin of the Hebrews in Barnabas, Clemens Romanus, Ignatius, and especially in Polycarp. The argument in the latter Father in favor of the Epistle of the Hebrews, he thus sums up: "His whole epistle [to the Philippians] consists of phrases and sentiments *taken from the New Testament*. The existence, it follows, of marks of reference in this epistle, to the Epistle to the Hebrews, is, in other words, so far as it goes, the existence of testimony to the canonical authority of this epistle, as valid as that to the canonical authority of any other part of the New Testament. But the marks in St. Polycarp, of reference to the Epistle to the Hebrews, are (his reference to the epistles of Peter not excepted) more numerous than his marks of reference to any other book of the New Testament. The shortness of the latter will enable the reader, without trouble or difficulty, to judge for himself as to the correctness of this statement; while the statement itself will admit of being materially lowered without affecting in the least degree the validity of the proof arising from the series of coincidences here submitted. In the last place, the whole body of references, possible, probable, and undoubted, are, in argumentative fairness, to be taken in connection with the fact that there exists, in this letter of Polycarp to the Philippians, one passage which, tried by the received tests of criticism, amounts to *an undoubted quotation, as a precept of apostolical authority, or rather as a precept of Saint Paul*, of Heb. 12: 28."

In weighing the testimony of the Apostolic Fathers, we should not forget that the question had not apparently yet arisen in reference to the author and authority of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and that the testimony in reference to it is "as strongly marked as most of the testimonies of an equally early date bearing upon the canonical authority of the other books of the New Testament. At the commencement of the second century of the Christian era, the Epistle to the Hebrews consequently stood on the same footing, in point

of historical evidences, with by far the greater part of the New Testament.”¹ There is certainly a greater number of allusions, in Clemens Romanus, to the Epistle of the Hebrews than to any other epistle of the New Testament.² Still he nowhere mentions the name of the title or author. Neither does he, in his allusions to the Epistles to the Thesalonians, Ephesians, Romans, Galatians, Colossians, Timothy, only in chap. 47, where he cites the first Epistle to the Corinthians, he reminds the Corinthians most naturally, having special occasion to do so, of that which Paul had already written to them.³

The Testimony of the Eastern Church.

The first testimony is that of *Pantaenus*, the head of the celebrated school at Alexandria, about A. D. 180, “the most learned Christian of the age in which he lived, and one whose weight and authority in the churches was very great.” It is found in an extract from his successor, Clement’s work “*Hypotyposes*,” preserved by Eusebius,⁴ and is as follows: “Now, as our blessed presbyter [*Pantaenus*] has said, since the Lord himself was sent by the Almighty as an apostle to the Hebrews, Paul being an apostle to the Gentiles, on account of modesty does not subscribe himself as the apostle to the Hebrews, both out of reverence for his Lord, and because, being a preacher and an apostle to the Gentiles, by a kind of supererogation he wrote to the Hebrews.”⁵

This view of *Pantaenus* is referred to by *Clement* in proof of his own belief, that Paul was the original author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. For immediately preceding the above quotation from Herodotus, he says: “In the work

¹ Forster, p. 613, 614.

² See Kirchhofer’s *Quellensammlung zur Gesch. d. N. Test. Kanons*, p. 238 seq.; Ebrard App. to Comm. Ch. 4 (A), and Forster, p. 575 seq.

³ Ebrard, App. p. 395. Davidson’s *Introd.* Vol. III. p. 262.

⁴ *Hist. Eccl. Lib.* VI. Ch. 14.

⁵ Ἡδὴ δὲ ὡς ὁ μακάριος ἔλεγε πρεσβύτερος, ἐπει ὁ Κύριος ἀπόστολος ὄν, τοῦ παντοκράτορος ἀπεστάλη πρὸς Ἑβραίους, διὰ μετρώτητα ὁ Παῦλος ὡς ἂν εἰς τὰ ἔθνη ἀπεσταλμένος οὐκ ἐγγράφει ἑαυτὸν Ἑβραίων ἀπόστολον, διὰ τε τὴν πρὸς τὸν κύριον τιμὴν, διὰ τε τὸ ἐκ περιουσίας, καὶ τοῖς Ἑβραίοις ἐπιστέλλειν, ἔθνων κήρυκα ὄντα καὶ ἀπόστολον.