

ARTICLE IV.

AUTHORSHIP AND CANONICITY OF THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

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[The following Article consists of extracts from lectures, introductory to the study of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which were delivered to the Junior Class in Andover Theological Seminary during the past term. They are published by request, and without material alteration. In them the author has attempted little more than to collect the scattered evidence in the case, and to present it fairly].

IN investigating the authorship of this Epistle, we must remember that as the writer has not told us his name, nor afforded us any means of ascertaining it beyond a doubt, and as there is no uniform and unbroken tradition on the subject, we must content ourselves with the balance of *probabilities*. Our conclusion must of necessity be built up of indirect and incidental evidence.

A. Among the general and admitted characteristics of the author are the following :

1. He does not study to *conceal* his name ; he assumes that he is known to his readers : cf. xiii. 18, " Pray for us," etc. 19, " That I may the sooner be restored to you." 22, sq. " Timothy has been set at liberty ; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you," etc.

2. He was one of the *distinguished* teachers of apostolic times. This is proved by the fact that he writes to an *entire church* (apparently) — indeed by the general *tone* of the Epistle.

3. He was a *born Jew* ; — the whole tenor of the Epistle puts this past question.

4. He was not one of those who heard the Lord in person ; but, in common with his readers, received the gospel *mediately*, from those who *were* ear-witnesses ; cf. ii. 3.

5. He was intimate with Timothy, the faithful friend and companion of Paul (xiii. 23).

B. The last-mentioned characteristic of the author (namely, intimacy with Timothy), is one of the signs which the Epistle is thought to afford that it was written by Paul. This opinion let us examine, considering first the *internal* and then the *external* arguments in reference to it.

Internal arguments in favor of Paul as its author: These may be comprised under three heads:

1. Facts or allusions contained in the Epistle:

a. In x. 34 the text. recept. runs τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου συνεπαθήσατε; "ye sympathized with" (Eng. vers. "had compassion on me in") "my bonds." This is naturally taken as an allusion to "*Paul the prisoner.*" But the reading of the text. recept. is hardly sustained. A (B ends with ix. 14, and the passage is wanting also in C) — D; 47, etc.; Syr., Arab. ERp., Copt., Arm., Vulg.; Chrys., etc., support the reading τοῖς δεσμοῖς — "ye sympathized with *those in bonds*" — which has been adopted by Griesbach, Lachmann, Scholz, Reiche, Tischendorf, Bleek, Delitzsch, Lünemann, Alford, etc.

b. In xiii. 19 the writer says: "I beseech you to *pray* for me that I may be *restored* to you the sooner:" ἵνα τάχιον ἀποκατασταθῶ ὑμῖν. This language, it is said, implies that the writer is a *prisoner*, and so favors the theory that he is Paul.

But we reply:

(1) It is true that the solicitation of their *prayers* for his restoration implies *hinderances* which those prayers might have some effect in removing (τάχιον); but

(2) ἀποκατασταθῶ does not of itself mean restored *from imprisonment*, while the subjoined ὑμῖν shows that here it *does* mean restored "*to you*," i.e. merely *from* absence; and

(3) v. 23 ("with whom [Timothy], if he come shortly, *I will see you*") shows that the writer was *personally* at liberty.

c. In xiii. 23 we read "Know ye that our brother Timothy has been set at liberty" (ἀπολελυμένον). Timothy was the companion of Paul; was with him during his confinement

at Rome; and if we render ἀπολελυμένον “sent away” on business, we may find a probable coincidence with Phil. ii. 19, “I trust to send Timotheus shortly unto you.” 23, “Him therefore I hope to send presently.” Our Epistle was written (it is said) by Paul during this absence of Timothy.

But the more natural and obvious meaning of ἀπολελυμένον is not “sent away,” but “liberated”; see the lexicons.

d. In xiii. 24, the writer sends salutations from “those of Italy,” οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰταλίας. This, it is alleged, corroborates the above indications, by showing that the Epistle was written from Rome, and therefore probably by Paul.

This argument turns upon the meaning of the debated phrase οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰταλίας. The possible interpretations may be classified under the two generic senses of ἀπὸ; namely, *local separation* and *origin*.

Taken in its primary sense of local separation, it may have reference,

Either (a) to the *persons*; in which case it denotes that the persons referred to are (together with the writer) “away from” Italy, although belonging to it. This, as it is the more obvious, seems also in the New Test. to be the more usual meaning of the phrase; cf. Matt. xv. 1 with Mark vii. 1; see also Acts vi. 9; (x. 23?); xxi. 27. Contrast, too, 2 Tim. i. 15, οἱ ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ.

If we adopt this interpretation in the present instance, we are met by the question: How comes the writer to send a salutation from the *Italians* alone, and not also from the *native* Christians of the place where he is writing? To this question it is hard to find a satisfactory answer.¹

Or (b) it may refer to the *salutation*; as if two local prepositions had been blended into one, so that the full expression would run οἱ ἐν τῇ Ἰταλίᾳ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰταλίας ἀσπάζονται ὑμᾶς. For other instances of this attraction; or rather pregnant con-

¹ Bleek, Lünemann, et al. regard the party as fugitives from the Neronian persecution, and as temporarily sojourning where there are no native Christians.

struction, cf. Matt. xxiv. 17; Luke xi. 13; Col. iv. 16. See Win. § 66. 6; Jelf, § 647; Kühn. ii. § 623, p. 318.

This interpretation is favored in the present case by the usage of the Greek epistolary style, which, as is well known, often employs those forms of expression (tenses, etc.), which are correct in reference to the reader of the letter, rather than to the writer. Buttman, however (*Grammatik des neutest. Sprachgebrauchs*, pp. 323, 324, cf. p. 83), adopts the construction which follows.

If *ἀπό* be taken to denote *origin*, the phrase is very like "the men of Italy," i.e. "the Italians." Cf. Matt. xxi. 11; Mark xv. 43, etc. (Cf. the use of Art. with *ἀπό* to denote a genus in such phrases as *οἱ ἀπὸ σοφίας*, i.e. docti, Lob. Phryn. p. 164.)

In this case the *present* locality of the persons in question is, strictly speaking, left undecided. It must be determined, if at all, upon other grounds. If in the present instance we suppose (a) that the persons referred to were (with the writer) in some place *out* of Italy, we encounter again the same difficulty which lay in the way of interpretation (a) of the former class, namely, Why is no mention made of native Christians?

If, then, we allow the circumstances of the case to decide that the phrase here means (b) Italians *in* Italy, we are still pursued by the question of locality, and asked, Italians *outside* of Rome? or, *including* the Christians of Rome?

Many have thought themselves compelled to reply "*the former*, viz. Italians *outside* of Rome." Otherwise it is supposed the Roman Christians would have been mentioned also; hence they say the Epistle was probably written *outside* of Rome. But this conclusion is as doubtful as the assumption upon which it rests. Even supposing the author to be writing from Rome, why need he in the greeting make separate mention of the Roman Christians? The generic term includes the specific — the Romans were also Italians. And just because it is the more comprehensive term, it is the more weighty and eligible. So in Acts xviii. 2 Aquila is spoken

of as ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰταλίας, and then just afterwards comes the more specific ἐκ τῆς Ῥώμης.¹

We conclude, therefore, that the phrase in question does not furnish with certainty a definite indication of locality. It may have been used by one writing from Rome; on the other hand, it may not have been. Hence (so Winer as above) no solid argument for the place where the Epistle was written can be found in the words; nor for the opinion that Paul was its author, so far as that opinion depends on their proof of the place.

2. The Epistle exhibits *doctrinal* resemblances to the epistles of Paul. Here we touch one of those points upon which discussion has been most ample. We have not space to consider all the arguments which have been advanced. Many of them need no consideration. Certainly we may quietly assume that an epistle written, as all must confess the Hebrews to have been, in the apostolic age by a leading Christian teacher to primitive Christians, harmonizes with the teachings of Paul relative to the preferableness of Christianity over Judaism, — its superiority as respects knowledge, motives, efficiency, permanence. The Christian system, with its characteristic doctrines, precepts, promises, sanctions, is indubitably taught in it. But we are concerned only with doctrinal *peculiarities*. The New Test. exhibits several well-marked types of doctrine. All have much in common, yet each has its distinctive characteristics. Accordingly biblical theologians speak of the Pauline type of doctrine, the Petrine, the Johannean, the Jacobic. We recognize the general appropriateness of such distinctions, however theologians may disagree when they come to define them minutely. Now the precise point of inquiry is: To which of these different patterns of doctrine does our Epistle belong? Do the views of truth presented in it accord with — *coincide* with, rather, for there is always harmony among inspired writers, even where there

¹ 1 Cor. xvi. 8 sq., where Paul, in writing from Ephesus, says (v. 19) "the churches of Asia salute you," is not a parallel case, for in v. 20 he appends an additional salutation from the Ephesian brethren distinctively.