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# HEBREWS

## INTRODUCTION.

### 1. THE DATE OF THE EPISTLE.

THOUGH the Epistle to the Hebrews was not in all quarters received unreservedly into the canon from the first, and though its authorship is still uncertain, yet none can reasonably doubt its early origin in the later period of the apostolic age. The evidence is both internal and external. The frequent allusions in it to Judaism, with its ritual, as a still existing system, are such as to render highly improbable any date after the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, A.D. 70. It is true that the mere use of verbs in the present with reference to the temple services would not be in itself conclusive; for this usage continued after the destruction of the temple, being found in Josephus, 'Ant.,' 3:9, 10; in Barnab., 7, etc.; in 'Epist. ad Diogn.,' 3; in the Talmud; and in the Epistle of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians (see Bishop Lightfoot's note on Acts 41. of that epistle). But we observe, further, the pervading tone of warning to the readers against being drawn back into Judaism, as though they were still surrounded by their old associations, and the total absence of reference to any breaking up of the ancient polity, such as might have been certainly expected if the event had taken place. Thus we may safely take the above date, A.D. 70, as a terminus ad quem, being only two years after the martyrdom of St. Paul, and many before the death of St. John. Strong also is the external evidence of an early date. Clement of Rome, about whom there can be no reasonable doubt that he was a disciple of the apostles and that he superintended the Church of Rome not long at least after St. Peter and St. Paul had suffered, and whose first Epistle to the Corinthians is undeniably genuine, uses language in that epistle which proves his acquaintance with the Epistle to the Hebrews. Of his quotations, or references, more will be said below under the head of "Canonicity." Then the Peshito, or Syriac Version of the New Testament, which is universally assigned to the most remote Christian antiquity, includes this Epistle. Further, Clement of Alexandria (who

presided over the catechetical school there at the close of the second century) not only himself mentions it, and quotes it often as St. Paul's, but speaks also of his own master and predecessor, Pantaenus, having

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expressed his views about it: "as the blessed presbyter used to say," etc. (Eusebius, 6:14, quoting from Clement's 'Hypotyposes'). Of the testimony of the Alexandrian Fathers more will be said under the head of "Authorship." Enough now for our present purpose to observe that the Epistle is hereby proved to have been well known and received in the Alexandrian Church in the time of Pantaenus, who takes us up very close to the apostolic age; and though the learned there, as will be seen, came afterwards to question St. Paul's direct authorship, yet its antiquity was never doubted.

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While internal evidence, as above noticed, seems to preclude any date later than A.D. 70, so does it, on the other hand, The Pulpit Commentary-Book of Hebrews (New Testament) any very much earlier. For the readers are addressed as members of a Church of old standing: they are reminded of “the former days,” when they had been at first “illuminated,” and of persecution endured in the past; sufficient time had elapsed for them to show serious signs of wavering from their early steadfastness; and their “leaders, who had spoken to them the Word of God,” had already passed away, being referred to in terms that suggest the idea of martyrdom ( [Hebrews 13:7](#)). If we could be sure of an The Pulpit Commentary-Book of Hebrews (New Testament) allusion here, among others, to James the Just (called “Bishop of Jerusalem,<sup>f1</sup> “ and the acknowledged leader of the Hebrew Christians), we should have a definite terminus a quo in A.D. 62, at the Passover of which year, according to Josephus and Eusebius, James was martyred. This allusion cannot, however, be more than a probability. All we can allege confidently is that the Epistle, from its contents, must have been written a considerable number of years The Pulpit Commentary-Book of Hebrews (New Testament) after the community addressed had received the faith, and hence, if during St. Paul’s life, not long before its close. Some time between A.D. 62 and 70 would very well suit the conditions.

## **2. THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE EPISTLE.**

Be it observed, in The Pulpit Commentary-Book of Hebrews (New Testament) the first place, that the Epistle is itself anonymous. The writer never mentions his own name or intimates who he is. Hence the questions of authorship and of canonicity may, in this case, be kept distinct. This could not be in the case of any The Pulpit Commentary-Book of Hebrews (New Testament) of St. Paul’s undoubted Epistles, in all of which he gives his own name and designation, and often alludes in detail to his circumstances at the time of writing and his relations to the persons addressed. In such cases denial of the alleged authorship would involve denial of the writing being what it professes to be, and hence of its claim to be The Pulpit Commentary-Book of Hebrews (New Testament) included in the canon as genuine and authoritative. But it is not so in the case before us. Nor does deference to the judgment or consentient

[<- Previous First Next ->](#) The Pulpit Commentary-Book of Hebrews (New Testament) traditions of the Church require us to conclude St. Paul to have been the author. The very title, “The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews,” is not ancient: the earlier title was simply [Pro<v JEbrai>ouv](#) . So in all the most ancient manuscripts, and so referred to by Origen, quoted by Eusebius (‘Hist. Eccl.,’ 6:25), and, though the tradition of St. Paul’s authorship was undoubtedly a The Pulpit Commentary-Book of Hebrews (New Testament) very early one, yet it was not in primitive times, any mere than in our own, considered conclusive by these who were competent to judge, including Fathers of the highest repute from the second century downwards.

The earliest known allusion to the authorship of the Epistle is that of Clement of Alexandria, already referred to as having often quoted it in his extant works, spoken of it himself, and recorded something that Pantænus before The Pulpit Commentary-Book of Hebrews (New Testament) him had said of it. We are indebted to Eusebius for the preservation of this interesting reference to the ‘Hypotyposes’ of Clement: — “In the ‘Hypotyposes,’ to speak briefly, he ( i.e. Clemens Alexandrinus) has given a compressed account of the whole testamentary Scripture, not omitting even the disputed books; I mean the Epistle of Jude and the rest of the catholic Epistles, and that of Barnabas, and the so-called Apocalypse of Peter. And as to the Epistle to the Hebrews, he says that it is Paul’s, but that it was written to the

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Hebrews The Pulpit Commentary-Book of Hebrews (New Testament) in the Hebrew language, and that Luke translated it carefully and published it to the Greeks; that consequently there is found the same color, with regard to style, in this Epistle and in the Acts; but that The Pulpit Commentary-Book of Hebrews (New Testament) it is not prefaced by 'Paul the apostle' with good reason; 'for' (says he) 'as he was sending it to the Hebrews, who The Pulpit Commentary-Book of Hebrews (New Testament) had conceived a prejudice against The Pulpit Commentary-Book of Hebrews (New Testament) him and suspected him, he very wisely did not repel them at the beginning by appending his name.' Then he goes on to say, 'But,' as the blessed presbyter before now used to say, 'since the Lord was sent to the Hebrews, as being the Apostle of the Almighty, Paul, out of modesty, as having Been sent to the Gentiles, does not inscribe himself apostle of the Hebrews, both because of the honor due to the Lord, and because of its being a work of supererogation that he wrote also to the Hebrews, being herald and apostle of the Gentiles'" (Eusebius, 'Hist. Eccl.,' 6:14).<sup>f2</sup>

"The blessed presbyter" referred to may be concluded to have been Pantaenus, to whose teaching Clement acknowledged himself to have Been especially indebted: "who also in the 'Hypotyposes,' which he composed, makes mention by name of Pantaenus as his master" (Eusebius, 'Hist. Eccl.,' 5:11; cf. 6:13). Also in The Pulpit Commentary-Book of Hebrews (New Testament) his 'Stromates' (1. § 11) Clement, speaking of his various teachers in various places, says that he found at last in Egypt the true master for whom he had before The Pulpit Commentary-Book of Hebrews (New Testament) sought in vain, meaning

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undoubtedly this same Pantaenus, whom Eusebius, speaking of the time of Commodus (A.D. 180-192), mentions as the leading teacher at Alexandria ('Hist. Eccl.,' 5:10). Jerome also ('In The Pulpit Commentary-Book of Hebrews (New Testament) Catal.,' 36) speaks of Pantaenus thus: "Pantaenus, stoicae sectae philosophus, juxta quandam veterem in Alexandria consuetudinem, ubi a Marco Evangelista semper ecclesiastici fuere doctores, tantae prudentiae et eruditionis tam in Scripturis divinis, quam in saeculari literatura, fuit, ut in Indiam quoque... mitteretur." It would appear, then, that Clement, on coming to Alexandria, found Pantaenus presiding over the famous catechetical school there, The Pulpit Commentary-Book of Hebrews (New Testament) whom, according to Eusebius and others, he succeeded catechetical school there, whom, according to Eusebius and others, he succeeded 203, it thus is evident that, certainly not long after the middle of the second century, the Epistle to the Hebrews was received in the Alexandrian Church as one of St. Paul's; and of course the presumption is that it had been handed down as such from a much earlier date (cf. Origen's words, quoted below, about "the ancients" having so transmitted it). This distinct early tradition is plainly of great importance in the argument as to authorship.

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It appears, further, from the above quotation that the Alexandrian scholars had observed certain peculiarities in the Epistle, distinguishing it from others by St. Paul. All that Pantaenus is said to have remarked on was its being, unlike the rest, anonymous; and this he had his own way of accounting for. After him Clement suggested a further explanation, and was also struck by the style being unlike St. Paul, and reminding him rather of St. Luke. He therefore maintained, having possibly started, the view of the Greek Epistle being a translation by that evangelist from a Hebrew original. It does not appear from the way in which Eusebius quotes him, as above, that this was more than his own opinion, or that he had anything beyond internal evidence to go

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upon, though Delitzsch thinks otherwise. His view, in any case, is untenable, since the Epistle has distinct internal evidence of The Pulpit Commentary-Book of Hebrews (New Testament) being an original composition in Greek. And so Origen, a still abler and more distinguished man, who succeeded Clement as head of the Alexandrian school, seems to have clearly seen, Eusebius being again our authority. After an account of Origen's catalogue of the canonical books, the historian proceeds," In addition to these things, concerning the Epistle to the The Pulpit Commentary-Book of Hebrews (New Testament) Hebrews, he (Origen) sets forth in The Pulpit Commentary-Book of Hebrews (New Testament) his homilies upon it The Pulpit Commentary-Book of Hebrews (New Testament) as follows: 'That the style ( [carakth<r th~vle>xewv](#) ) of the Epistle entitled to the Hebrews has not the rudeness in speech ( [to< ejn lo>gw| ijdiwtiko>n](#) ) of the apostle, who acknowledged himself to be rude in speech ( [ijdiw>thn tw~| lo>gw|](#) : see <sup><471106></sup>2 Corinthians 11:6), that is, in his diction, but that the [<- Previous First Next ->](#)

Epistle is more purely Greek in composition ( [sunqe>sei th~v le>xewv](#) ), every one who is competent The Pulpit Commentary-Book of Hebrews (New Testament) to judge of differences of diction would acknowledge. Again, that the thoughts of the Epistle are wonderful, and not second to the acknowledged apostolic writings, this, too, every one that gives attention to the reading of the apostolic writings would agree.' Then, after other things, he adds, further,' But I, to declare my own opinion, should say that the thoughts are the apostle's, but the diction and composition that of some one who recorded from memory the apostle's teaching, and, as it were, interpreted [or 'wrote a commentary on,' [scoliograph>santov](#) ] what had been spoken by his master. If, then, any Church The Pulpit Commentary-Book of Hebrews (New Testament) receives this Epistle as Paul's, let it be well esteemed, even also on this account [ i.e. let it not on this account lose the credit due to it as a witness to the truth]; for not without good reason ( [ouj ga<r eijkh~|](#) ) have the men of old handed it down as Paul's. But as to who wrote the Epistle, the truth God knows. The account that has reached us is, on the part of some, that Clement, who became Bishop of the Romans, wrote the Epistle; on the part of others, that Luke, who wrote the Gospel and the Acts, did so'" (Eusebius, 'Hist. Eccl.,' 6:25).

Now, let us here observe that Origen does not, any more than his predecessors, dispute the essentially Pauline origin of the Epistle. Of this he is satisfied, both on the ground of the ancient tradition to which he properly attaches great importance, and also on the ground of the ideas of the Epistle being so entirely worthy of the great apostle. He only feels himself convinced, The Pulpit Commentary-Book of Hebrews (New Testament) in view of the Greek idiom, and the general style, that Paul could not have been the actual writer. His theory is compatible with the Epistle having been written either during the apostle's life and with his knowledge and sanction, or after his death by a disciple who had taken notes of his teaching, or at any rate retained it in his mind. Further, he evidently attaches no value to the opinions which had become current in his time as to one person rather than another having been the actual writer. He was too sound a critic to consider (as Clement seems to have done) mere coincidences of phraseology cogent evidences in favor of St. Luke. All he can be sure of is that the Epistle had not been written by St. Paul himself, though he has no doubt of its being Pauline, i.e. a true embodiment of St. Paul's teaching. Now, the opinion of Origen, thus expressed, is of peculiar value; not only on account of the early ago in which he lived, with all the facts that could be then known before him, but also because of his competence to form a sound judgment on such a subject; and the fact of his having been an original and somewhat free thinker adds to, rather than detracts from,

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the value of his verdict. His well-considered words express,

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in fact, the state of the case as it remains to the present day, subsequent inquiries having thrown little further light upon it.

After Origen, Dionysius of Alexandria (Hebrews A.D. 264-5), the bishops who succeeded him, and all the ecclesiastical writers of Egypt, Syria, and the East generally, cite the Epistle without hesitation as St. Paul's. Arius, too, and the early Arians so accepted it; and if some of the later Arians rejected it as such, it appears to have been only on controversial grounds. See Epiphanius, 'Heres.,' 69; and Theodoret, in the preface to his commentary on the Epistle, who says, "It is no wonder that those who are infected with the Arian malady should rage against the apostolic writings, separating the Epistle to the Hebrews from the rest, and calling it spurious." Eusebius also, expressing the unanimous judgment of the East, places it (though not without allusion to the doubts, to be noticed presently, entertained by the Church of Rome) among the indisputable Pauline writings ('Hist. Eccl.,' 3:3; The Pulpit Commentary-Book of Hebrews (New Testament) 3:25). He is aware, however, of the difficulties attending the supposition that the Greek Epistle as it stands was written by St. Paul, and gives the translation theory (which, as we have seen, was held by Clement of Alexandria) as the current one in his day, or at any rate as what he had himself got hold of: "For Paul having written to the Hebrews in their native language, The Pulpit Commentary-Book of Hebrews (New Testament) some say that Luke the evangelist, and others that this same Clement ( i.e. of Rome), translated the The Pulpit Commentary-Book of Hebrews (New Testament) writing." He adds his own opinion in favor of Clement having been the translator, on the ground of resemblance, in diction and thought, between his undoubted epistle The Pulpit Commentary-Book of Hebrews (New Testament) to the Corinthians and the Epistle to the Hebrews. What he thus says is only of value as testimony The Pulpit Commentary-Book of Hebrews (New Testament) to the acceptance of the Epistle throughout the East as essentially Pauline. His own notions, as to its being a translation, and Clement the translator, need carry little weight with us; those of Origen (which, though he The Pulpit Commentary-Book of Hebrews (New Testament) himself records them, he does not seem to have appreciated) of course outweigh them greatly.

## **The Pulpit Commentary Book Of Hebrews New Testament**

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