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AUTHORSHIP OF THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS AGAIN

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IN the BIBLIOTHECA SACRA of January, 1918, page 18, Professor Preserved Smith, writing of Luther, says: "Some of his historical and philological judgments about the books of the Bible, as that . . . Paul did not write the Epistle to the Hebrews, are undoubtedly correct." And Professor Charles Foster Kent, of Yale, says: "The only fact definitely established is that Paul did not write it."*

Such positiveness of assertion about a mooted question, if it does not produce conviction in one who hears it, is apt, if he cares enough about the matter, to lead him to re-examine the subject.

A number of authors have been alleged. Luther was the first to name Apollos of Act xviii. 24-28, and the great reformer has had quite a following. The versatile and eccentric Tertullian was the first to name Barnabas of Acts xv. 35-39, and the idea was revived by Cameron, a Scotch critic of the 17th century. Clement of Rome (Phil. iv. 3), and Paul's companions, Luke (Col. iv. 14) and Silas (Acts xv. 40), have each been urged, and even the joint authorship of Aquila and Priscilla (Acts xviii. 26) has been proposed, a proposition that the Standard Bible Dictionary pronounces "more curious than convincing." One Professor has gone so far as to have Priscilla irrupt alone into the domain of this Bible authorship. In an article in the *Homiletic Review*, March, 1913, John M. Grant of London, has this sentence: "From these many coincidences and peculiarities, I suggest the name of Nico-

*"The Origin and Permanent Value of the Old Testament,"
page 70.

demus as the probable author of the Epistle to the Hebrews."

That Paul was the author of the Epistle was held by Irenaeus (115-190) who was a pupil of Polycarp who was a pupil of the Apostle John. This seems to be quite getting back to reliable authenticity. The same view was held by Clement of Alexandria (130-200), Origen (186-253), Dionysius (—264), Gregory Nazianzen (330-390), Eusebius (260-340) known as the "Father of Church History," Chrysostom (347-407), Jerome (345-420), Athanasius (269-373), and many others of that early period.

The Council of Antioch (269), of Nice (325), of Laodicea (363), not to mention others, asserted the Pauline authorship.

The Alexandrian Church, the Churches of Palestine, Syria, Cappadocia, Mesopotamia, and Asia Minor, held the same view.

Says the Catholic Encyclopaedia, VII. 182, "In the East the writing was unanimously regarded as a letter of St. Paul." Says "The Holy Bible Commentary" (Anglican), "The Testimony of the Eastern Church is consistent and clear" (p. 25). To be sure, a different opinion sprang up in the West, but very pertinent seems the Anglican question: "Shall the positive testimony of men who, knowing St. Paul intimately, were qualified to give witness on such a point, be outweighed by the doubts of those who lived some hundred years later, and therefore were not so qualified? To do this would be to violate a fundamental rule of evidence" (p. 5). After surveying the whole field, Eastern and Western, and coming down to the present generation, the Dictionary of Religious Knowledge, edited by Lyman Abbott, says: "It is generally attributed to Paul . . . If not Paul's, it is certainly Pauline" (p. 421).

It must be admitted that not a single external fact, not a shred of historic proof, has appeared since that early period that militates against the old-time judgment. The

consensus of historic testimony is all in favor of St. Paul as author. The change of view has come from the rise of what is called "the method of historical inquiry characteristic of our own age."

It is true that many of the adroitly devised claims and skilfully drawn reasons for other authorship have appearance of no little plausibility. By far the most plausible objection of all is that of difference in literary style of Hebrews from Paul's other writings,—a difference that is clearly apparent. But many a writer or speaker of to-day has shown as great difference in style, varying according to subject, mood, occasion. The other writings of Paul all show marks of haste in composition, written *currente calamo*, with running pen, as was befitting his rushing, impetuous life. But if, as many maintain, this Epistle was written in the enforced leisure of his two years' imprisonment at Caesarea, probably A. D. 58-60, there would be plenty of time for elaboration and finish which would amply account for the requirements of the literary problem. No more satisfactory have any of the other objections seemed.

The present writer would modestly offer a contribution to this question that, so far as he is aware, is not found in any of the commentaries or cyclopedias.

There are considerations bearing upon the Pauline authorship—somehow strangely overlooked—contained in the Scriptures themselves, which possibly may be deemed decisive, *i. e.*, by those who regard the Bible itself as authoritative. Let there be noted three facts, and what seems to be a necessary inference therefrom.

Fact 1. Peter wrote his First Epistle to a distinct and definite people, viz., the Hebrews or dispersed Jews, "Sojourners of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia" (i. 1).

Fact 2. Peter wrote his Second Epistle to the very same parties: "This is now, beloved, the second Epistle that I write unto you" (iii. 1).

Fact 3. Paul wrote an Epistle to the very same parties: "Even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto y-o-u" (2 Pet. iii. 15).

Such are the facts. Certainly, then, Paul wrote *an* Epistle to the Hebrews. As certainly the Epistle to the Hebrews is Pauline: this is admitted on all hands.

What inference is legitimate, aye required, if not this: viz., Paul's undeniable *an* Epistle to the Hebrews is *the* Epistle to the Hebrews. If *an* Epistle is not *the* Epistle, where is it? Saneness may well accept the conclusion that this is it.

Though not strictly within the scope of our argument, this occasion seems too good to lose, to make an important point in regard to Paul's writings. How Peter regards them may be seen in the verse following the one last quoted: "As also in all his Epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction." Peter classes "all his Epistles" with "the other Scriptures," *i. e.*, the Old Testament, for there was no New Testament then; therefore positing for these also a divine origin and authority, since those "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. i. 21). And this would consequently guarantee Paul's statement that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. iii. 16).