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The Authorship and Character of the So-called “Epistle to the Hebrews”

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THE present essay is chiefly concerned with two things : first, the theory that the “Epistle to the Hebrews” was written by a woman, the evangelist Priscilla ; and second, the literary character of the document in its original form.

Harnack, in an article entitled “Probabilia über die Adresse und den Verfasser des Hebräerbriefs,” published in the *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 1900, 16–41, contends, with very great skill and ingenuity, that the author of the “Epistle to the Hebrews” was no other than Prisca, or Priscilla, the wife of Aquila — both of whom are mentioned several times, with distinction, in the New Testament writings. The “Epistle” was sent, Harnack concludes, from some city in the eastern part of the Mediterranean lands to a small circle of believers in Rome ; namely, that circle in which Aquila and Prisca had themselves formerly lived. The name of the author was suppressed, he believes, because of the feeling that a *woman* ought not to be given such prominence in the church.

To these conclusions a number of scholars of note have already given assent. Harnack starts out from the astonishing fact (“die erstaunliche Thatsache”) that the name of the author of the “Epistle” was lost. “Astonishing” is, indeed, a mild term to use, under the circumstances. Here, by his theory, is a “letter” written by a beloved teacher and leader to a *Roman circle*, preserved and cherished in Rome and *first attested there* — and yet the name of the author was not known, or was successfully kept hidden, even in the very next generation after the sending of the letter !

Harnack lays due emphasis on the fact, previously set forth by Zahn and others, that the "Epistle" must have circulated anonymously in Rome during at least a part of the second century. He then proceeds (p. 24): "From this we must conclude, that the church which gave the letter currency — and that was the Roman church — sent it out as an anonymous writing; whether because they no longer knew the name of its author (though that is less probable), or because they purposely suppressed the name." ("Dann ergibt sich aber, dass ihn die Gemeinde, die ihn verbreitet hat — und das war die römische — ohne Verfassernamen hat ausgehen lassen, sei es weil sie den Verfassernamen nicht mehr wusste [doch das ist weniger wahrscheinlich], sei es weil sie ihn absichtlich unterdrückte.")

At first hearing, this sounds like a tenable theory; but when it is examined more carefully, its weak points become apparent. The Roman church might, indeed, send out such a writing without address or name attached, with the result of causing it to circulate anonymously in Syria, Egypt, North Africa (possibly), and other more or less remote regions. This all may be granted; but when we come to consider the anonymous circulation *in Rome itself*, the immense difficulty of the theory is seen. Is it conceivable that the name of the well-known writer of this great "Epistle" should have been *lost* in Rome? Or, again, admitting for the sake of argument that there might have been strong objection to granting such ecclesiastical esteem to a woman, can we believe it possible that the truth as to the authorship can have been thus completely forced out of sight? A fine pastoral letter may circulate among many congregations, and be read and enjoyed for its universally helpful qualities; in strange circles, it makes little or no difference who wrote it; *but to the church originally addressed in it, the authorship is the one fact of supreme importance.* It is a personal message, not a general treatise, and this fundamental distinction cannot be ignored.

This very city, according to Harnack's theory, was the home of that circle of Christians to whom the letter was

originally sent. Here it was put into general circulation, and exercised a strong influence as early as 96 A.D. (quoted by Clement) ; here the writer herself had lived and worked, and occupied a leading position ; the little circle of believers had at first held its meetings in her own house ; and finally, she is mentioned by name, and with especial honor, in the Epistle of Paul to the Romans (16 3-5), to say nothing of the other mention which she receives in the Epistles and the Acts (Acts 18 2, 26, 1 Cor. 16 19, 2 Tim. 4 19).

Did Prisca have no friends in Rome ? Was the little company that met in her house (mentioned by Paul) unknown to the Roman church ? Were there no other women in that church ? Did none of these sisters in Christ, co-workers and fellow sufferers with Prisca, take any pride in this splendid composition of hers ? Or was it an easy matter, in those days, to make women hold their tongues, and forget ?

The theory of a strong and very widespread objection to the feminine authorship is not reasonable, in view of what we know. Even if we could suppose that a large part of the Roman church might have been made to see the matter in this way, we could be quite certain that not *all* would consent. And again, can any adequate reason be imagined why even a minority should have wished to expunge and forget Prisca's name ? While the authorship was still known, no one in Rome could ever have expected or wished this writing to be regarded as inspired Scripture.

Even if Harnack were entirely in the right with his perhaps too acute argument regarding the "Interpolator β " in Acts 18 (*ibid.* pp. 38 ff.), the utmost that is proved is this, that somebody, early in the second century, wished to make Prisca's name a little less conspicuous. That this purpose was not very seriously pursued, however, is obvious enough from the fact that there is not even *one* representative of the " β text" in which the name is consistently removed. If any animus is really apparent here, it is the animus of one disgruntled man, not that of a great church.

If it could ever have seemed to the church in Rome essential that the name of the woman co-author should be sup-

pressed, nothing could have been easier than to designate it simply as *the composition of Aquila*. Why not? Aquila, if his name had ever been heard of, anywhere, in connection with this "Epistle," might as well have been credited with it as Barnabas or Apollos. He holds one of the most honored places in the history of the early church. Harnack himself sets forth with sufficient emphasis the fact that his work had truly œcumenical significance (pp. 34 ff.). Paul, in the Epistle to the Romans, calls him his "fellow-worker in Christ Jesus," and the phrase was not merely complimentary. As Harnack says, "Prisca and Aquila are thereby given true official standing as evangelists and teachers." Calling the writing the "Epistle of Aquila" would have been a very easy way, and an honest way, of getting rid of the obnoxious feminine — if there had been an urgent and generally recognized reason for getting rid of it. Was not the husband the head, according to Paul?

If there had been, among those influential in the church at Rome, any attempt in this earliest period to establish the writing *as an epistle of Paul*, then we might see a reason for attempting to suppress and forget the names of both Aquila and Prisca. "For *attempting* to suppress," I say, since the success of the attempt is quite incredible, under the circumstances. But no such motive appears; on the contrary, as Zahn and Harnack (as well as others) have argued, this "Epistle" was truly anonymous for some time before the names of Barnabas and Paul were attached to it. And during this time it was in no sense a part of the "New Testament," in any quarter of the Christian world.

Thus Harnack's theory fails completely, I believe, at the most vital point.

To this brilliant, but unconvincing, argument of Harnack, Rendel Harris, in his *Side Lights on New Testament Research*, London, 1908, adds a characteristically acute appendix. Starting from a suggestion made by Harnack in a footnote (*loc. cit.*, p. 40, note 6), he argues from the eleventh chapter of the "Epistle" that the author "feminizes," and was therefore presumably a woman. I quote his words (p. 154):

“In a note at the end of his article on the Authorship of Hebrews, Harnack remarks that without laying too much stress on the observation, we ought not to neglect to notice that in the catalogue of Heroes of Faith in ch. xi, women are three times mentioned: in two of these references (*i.e.* Sarah and Rahab) the allusion is very far-fetched. The mention of Sarah with Abraham is an astonishment to the expositor, and still more the abrupt intrusion into the roll of heroes of the words, ‘women received their dead raised to life again!’ And it seems clear that a tendency is here betrayed of a desire to incorporate women also amongst the witnesses to faith, for which the Old Testament furnishes very imperfect material.

“The point raised is apparently a small one, as it is only raised in a note; but it is a very important one, and demands closer and further investigation.” Then, after brief mention of the difficulties created by the appearance of Sarah, Rahab, and the women of Shunem and Sarepta in the list, he continues (p. 156): “So the suggestion of ‘feminization’ in the Epistle remains, and the only question is whether it can be counterbalanced or rendered more striking. Does Hebrews xi feminize? that is the question.”

Harris himself calls attention to the fact that the feminizing goes a singularly short distance, in view of the available material in the Old Testament. But he then goes on to argue, very skillfully—though, as it seems to me, not quite successfully—that Judith and Esther are also referred to in this chapter of great names and deeds. And he finally concludes (p. 174): “So there ought to be no hesitation in saying positively, what Harnack said doubtfully, that the eleventh chapter has feminized. And if this be correct, the case for the authorship of Priscilla is much strengthened by the removal of some of the strongest objections. We are still somewhat surprised at not finding a definite reference to Deborah, but what we have found is positive evidence, which silence on certain points hardly affects any further.”

The case which he makes out can hardly be called a strong one, at its best. Such famous names as those of Deborah

and Hannah, to say nothing of others, are omitted altogether, while some of the allusions actually made are noticeably vague. Nevertheless, it may be urged with some plausibility both that women are given more space here than we should expect them to have, and also that the author of the writing "drags in" certain heroines of the old Hebrew faith where there seems to be no sufficient reason for their presence. Why parade Sarah and Rahab as shining examples?

We may easily grant this, and even admit the claim of Harnack and Rendel Harris that the writer "feminizes," and yet differ with them, *toto coelo*, as to the significance of the fact. Do only female writers feminize? Is the *argumentum ad feminam* used only by women? Do men who are addressing their mixed audiences never try to appeal especially to their hearers of the other sex? In these latter days, when the pews in church are chiefly occupied by women, this sort of literary procedure is quite familiar, and obviously justified. And it was always justified. We know, from the many sources of evidence preserved to us, that the primitive Christian congregations contained a large proportion of women, forming a very helpful and influential part—and, from what we know of the history of woman's religious faith, we should say the most steadfast part—of the believing community. Were they to be left out of account in such an exhortation as this?

It might even be urged that the writer here is shown to be a man by the very fact that these feminine examples are hung to the discourse by such a slender thread. The masculine writer believing—as men still complacently do—that his women hearers would not demand logic, but would be sufficiently captured by any superficial allusion, satisfied himself by mentioning the first names that came into his head. Neither Priscilla, nor any other woman writer, would ever have dealt thus, when the Old Testament really contains a very considerable number of worthy heroines. But this is hardly fair to our author. We do not know the circumstances under which he wrote, or what particular impression he might have wished to make on the women—very definite

ones, doubtless—who were in his mind or on his heart. At the present day, it very often happens that the allusion made by a preacher sounds far-fetched, or quite unnecessary, to the most of his congregation—who cannot know that the superfluous phrase was really a message delivered to, and understood by, a quiet woman in the front pew. We do not know, moreover, how certain illustrations were used at that time, and what impression they were calculated to make. “Look at the harlot, Rahab,” the preacher may have said. “Even such a woman was glorified by her faith, and accepted of God because of it; how much more the pure and noble saints, sisters in the faith of Christ, who hear my words!”

It may possibly be granted, then, that the author of our discourse “feminizes”; but this, if a fact, does not afford even the smallest probability that a woman was the author.

But Harris has another argument to bring forward; namely, that derived from a comparison of the list of heroes in Heb. 11 with the list in Ecclus. 44. Bar Sira, *a man*, admits no women into his catalogue of great names; the list in Hebrews does admit them; *ergo*, Hebrews was probably written by a woman. He says, p. 165, speaking of Bar Sira’s catalogue: “Now if we review this list, I think we shall see that here also the writer is turning the pages of his Bible, at least mentally, when he writes; the reference to the twelve prophets probably shows that he is working from a book. So he is doing just the same as the writer to the Hebrews is doing. And the curious thing is that he never mentions a woman at all in the whole of his story of Israel. This, then, is the way in which a man would write the historical summary; and the observation and the comparison with Hebrews strongly confirms Harnack’s suggestion that the latter writer has feminized. It is either a woman or a man under the influence of a woman.”¹

Leaving altogether out of account the great difference in the nature of the two compositions, and the fact that Ecclus. 44 begins with the words: “Let us now praise famous men,

¹ I should like to interject at this point the query, whether it is a common thing to find a man who is *not* more or less “under the influence of a woman.”

and our fathers that begat us," a sufficient reply to Harris's argument is found in Bar Sira's severe and superior attitude toward womankind in general. He sometimes says fine things about women, it is true, but in general they fare rather poorly in his hands, and a good many of his sayings regarding them are remarkably caustic. It was partly for this specific reason, judging from the published records, that the use of the Apocrypha was fought against, and virtually discontinued, in the English church at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Both women and men were tired of the reiteration, in the public reading of the Scriptures, of such verses as these: "As the climbing up a sandy way is to the feet of the aged, so is a wife full of words to a quiet man" (25 20); "Of woman came the beginning of sin, and through her we all die" (25 24); "All wickedness is but little to the wickedness of a woman" (25 19). It was felt that while one might endure (perhaps even with a degree of complacency) hearing such sentiments expressed occasionally, as witticisms, it became a very different matter when they were regularly read in church. It is not safe, then, to draw conclusions from the behavior of the son of Sirach. Indeed, some scholars have argued, from the tone of his proverbs, that he had had some unusual domestic infelicity.

Harris, with his usual candor, calls attention to one apparent objection to his own theory, namely, the masculine gender in the Greek of Heb. 11 32: Καὶ τί ἔτι λέγω; ἐπιλείψει με γὰρ διηγούμενον (masc.!) ὁ χρόνος κ.τ.λ. The gender of the participle here tells a perfectly plain story; the writer or speaker, whether actual or imagined, is a man, not a woman. There is no variation in the manuscripts at this point. Manuscripts are by no means infallible; and *if* the hypothesis of feminine authorship were otherwise justified, one might even think of emendation here. But on the contrary, the masculine ending bears out the conclusion derived from all other sources.

It would obviously do no good to Harnack and Harris to suppose that this participle in the masculine singular referred to *Aquila*, the husband of Prisca; for if he, as co-

author, could thus be given the precedence in the document itself, the whole argument as to the suppression of the name collapses at once! The "grammatical argument" is, then, as Harris (p. 174) feared it might be, a fatal one.

The conclusion reached, from all directions, seems to be this, that the hypothesis of Prisca's authorship of the document cannot be seriously entertained.

Secondly, the "Epistle to the Hebrews" is not at all an *epistle* in any legitimate use of the term.

Every one knows that the term "letter" or "epistle" covers a large variety of compositions. There is a wide distance between the private or merely personal communication and the extended document intended for circulation. In our own day it not infrequently happens that a scholar reviews an important publication by writing his criticism in the form of a letter addressed to its author; the letter being published and circulated as a pamphlet, or even as a thick book. In like manner, extended discussions of political, educational, or religious matters are occasionally given the epistolary form, when this seems to the author the most convenient or effective way of reaching his end. We have in the New Testament some fine specimens of this sort of letter, especially the longer epistles of Paul, in which the writer develops very elaborately, and more or less systematically, certain views which he wishes to have circulated and studied.

Deissmann, in his *Bibelstudien*, has recently set forth, possibly a little too laboriously, a distinction between the "letter" and the "epistle." It is perhaps hardly necessary, or desirable, to attempt to draw any such line. So far as Deissmann's conclusions are valid, they are substantially what every one has always known.² Almost any sort of material may be put into the form of a letter, it is true; but it is *not* true that a composition belonging to a definite literary class of its own, and obviously fashioned according to

² Deissmann's conclusion as to the "Epistle to the Hebrews" is very much like my own, however. See below.

the rules governing the structure of writings belonging to that class, can legitimately be turned into a letter or an "epistle," by simply prefixing an address, and appending conventional formulæ: "Wishing you the best of health, I am yours truly, So-and-So." This could not be done, for instance, with the Song of Songs; though this is in large part personal and intimate, and couched in the first person. Nor could it be done with 4 Maccabees, nor with Plato's address to the Athenians in the Menexenos, nor with any similar composition. In each of these cases, study shows that the work was originally constructed according to well-known literary rules, for the purpose of giving it the effect belonging to productions of its own definite class.

This is true, in eminent degree, of the so-called "Epistle to the Hebrews." It is (or rather was, in its original form) *an oration*, constructed most elaborately according to the Hellenistic canons of the orator's art. It is not only rhetorical in tone; it is also technically rhetorical in the details of its structure.³ From the first words of the high-sounding exordium on to very nearly the end of the book, we have only the carefully prepared address of a learned and gifted orator to his small and intimately known congregation.

It is only when the last chapter is reached that we see introduced, most incongruously, matter of another sort; namely, passages belonging of necessity to epistolary correspondence. Thus 13 18 f.: "Pray for us; for we are persuaded that we have a good conscience, desiring to live honestly in all things. And I exhort you the more exceedingly to do this, *that I may be restored to you the sooner.*" And vs. 22 ff.: "But I exhort you, brethren, bear with the word of exhortation; *for I have written unto you in few words. Know ye that our brother Timothy hath been set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you. Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you.*" Moreover, in some other parts of this same thirteenth chapter, and especially at the very beginning of it, we see that the character

³ It is not necessary to argue this point here. The technical evidence has been set forth with sufficient fullness by German scholars. See below.

of the composition has undergone a striking change. Instead of the continuous logical sequence of thought, and the well planned rhetorical construction, we find a loose succession of exhortations, such as might well be heaped up at the end of a pastoral letter, but are most disturbing as appendages to a formal oration. The case is altogether different from that of Romans 16, or of 2 Corinthians 13, for example, because in those and all the similar cases an epistle has preceded. Personal messages and practical admonitions are as truly out of place, from the literary point of view, after Hebrews 1-12 as they would be at the close of Cicero's *Pro Lege Manilia* or Demosthenes' Oration on the Crown.

What has happened, then, is plainly this: a sermon has been transformed into an epistle by means of additions at or near the end. Another fact, equally evident, is that the "Epistle" claims to be the work of one of the great leaders of the church. Nor can it be doubtful who this leader is, when, in addition to the allusion to "our brother Timothy," we observe how *specifically Pauline words and phrases* appear in convincing number in these very passages which are out of keeping with the main discourse. The suspicion of at least a reminiscence of Paul arises at the outset, in the first section of this chapter 13, when we notice in vs. 5 the juxtaposition of ἀφιλάργυρος (cf. 1 Tim. 3 3) and ἀρκούμενοι (cf. 1 Tim. 6 8), and this suspicion soon becomes certainty; for the Pauline words and phrases in the latter part of the chapter, see Wrede, *Das literarische Rätsel des Hebräerbriefs*, pp. 39-63.

These things, when taken in connection with the facts above stated regarding the anonymity of the work, leave (as it seems to me) only one conclusion possible. An anonymous sermon, or homily, which first came into general circulation in Rome, and was well known there (though its authorship was not known) in the latter part of the first century A.D., was transformed into an apostolical letter, presumably a letter of Paul, addressed to the Roman church. The alteration was effected by means of slight additions and insertions made in the closing portion, and its purpose was to gain for the work

the authority which it merited, but which it could be given in no other way.

Each one of the essential features of this general conclusion has already found its advocates, among New Testament scholars, and a few have arrived at a final result very similar to the one which I have stated. The literature is given quite fully in Wrede's pamphlet, just referred to, pp. 1-5. Berger, early in the nineteenth century, pronounced the "Epistle to the Hebrews" a homily, and argued that the closing passage 13 22-25 was a later addition by another hand. Other noted scholars agreed with Berger as to the character of the work; among them De Wette, who found the closing passage 13 18-25 especially disturbing after what had preceded. Overbeck (1880) thought the work an epistle, and yet believed 13 22-25 to have been added by a later hand for the purpose of making Paul appear to have been the author of the letter. Weizsäcker (1886) agreed with De Wette in thinking that the pseudo-ending began with 13 18. Deissmann, *Bibelstudien*, rightly insisted that the writing is not a letter in any sense; according to his view, it is a diatribe. On the technically rhetorical character of the work, see for example Holtzmann's *Hand-commentar* (Von Soden), p. 10, where the main divisions of the composition, corresponding to those of a formal oration in the Alexandrine style, are indicated: 1 1-4 13 *προοίμιον πρὸς εὐνοίαν*, 4 14-6 20 *διήγησις πρὸς πιθανότητα*, 7 1-10 18 *ἀπόδειξις πρὸς πειθῶ*, 10 19-end *ἐπίλογος*. Wrede, *op. cit.*, 1906, believes that the work is a unit, but that its author changed his mind in the course of its composition. It was at first not intended as a letter; finally, however, its author not only gave it an epistolary ending, but deliberately made it appear to be a prison-letter of the Apostle Paul. And finally Perdelwitz, "Das literarische Problem des Hebräerbriefs," in the *Zeitschrift für die N. T. Wissenschaft*, 1910, 59-78, 105-123, maintains that our document was originally a sermon preached by some "Wanderprediger" to gentile Christians in Asia Minor; and that some one of its hearers made a copy of it, transformed it into a letter by adding the verses 13 22-25, and sent it to

Christian friends of his in Rome, for their comfort and edification.

Other scholars might also be mentioned, but those whom I have named are the principal representatives of the theories with which my own is most nearly concerned. I may add that my opinion as to the origin, composition, and history of the document is not one which I have recently formed, since I expressed it publicly, though not in writing, as long ago as 1898.

The all-important question is concerning the composition of chapter 13. That a part of the chapter is homogeneous with chapters 1-12, and originally formed a portion of the same writing, is so obvious as to need no argument. The passage 12 18-29 cannot possibly have formed the conclusion of the discourse; the thought requires to be continued, and the continuation is ready to hand. The vss. 13 1-7 are most disturbing, both because they interrupt the thought, and also because they mar the beauty of this stately composition. The transition from noble imagery and sustained reasoning to this formless jumble of rather commonplace admonitions is so abrupt as to be painful. But it is quite out of the question to suppose that chapter 13 *as a whole* is a later addition to chapters 1-12.

There is one passage, in the middle of the chapter, in which we know that we are once more face to face with the author of the whole discourse; namely, vss. 10-15. Here we find both his favorite ideas and the characteristic manner of setting them forth. Thus, the idea of the homelessness of the faithful ones reappears in vss. 13 f.: "Let us, therefore, go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For we have not here an abiding city, but we seek after the city which is to come." Rendel Harris, in arguing for the authorship by Priscilla and Aquila, lays stress on the recurrence of this characteristic idea, and finds its source in the fact that the faithful pair had been driven from Rome by the edict of Claudius. He shows (pp. 157 f.) that chapter 11, especially in its first part, deals with wanderers from the home-land, patriarchs who went forth, leaders who were

driven from their cities, and spent their days in the tents of migration. They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. "So," he concludes, "we write against this chapter the words, 'An exile speaks.'" But I believe that the source of the writer's thought of exile lies deeper than any historical event, and that the idea is even more pervasive, and more touchingly conceived, than Harris supposes. We must look rather to the isolated, often outlawed, position of these primitive Christians. They were not of this world, but sought a better one. They had been disowned by their former friends, and even by their own flesh and blood, but a home was awaiting them.

Verses 10-15, then, certainly belong to the original discourse. But so also do vss. 8 and 9. It is plain, indeed, that in the passage 13 8-15 we have the immediate and necessary conclusion of the train of thought which is broken off at 12 29. In vss. 27 and 28 the preacher had been contrasting transitory things with the things which are enduring; just before this, in 24 ff., he had pointed to Jesus as the goal, and made mention of his blood of the new covenant; in vs. 28, finally, the idea of an unending service to God had been reached. In vss. 8-10 these threads are gathered and carried on in just the way which we should expect, and the discourse moves on, in its own lofty style, to the worthy conclusion in vs. 15.

Moreover, the doxology in vss. 20 and 21 belonged to the sermon in its original form, as probably no one would doubt. Verses 16-19, on the contrary, are a part of the later interpolation. The principal evidence of this may be seen in Wrede, pp. 47-62; and it is indeed obvious enough that vss. 16 and 17 came from the same source as 18 f., 22-25, and 1-7.

The false ending, be it noted, was not simply adjoined; it was *dovetailed* to the main document, and the work was skillfully done. Those of the ancient world who edited and expanded the works of others, knew that their task was a delicate one, and used enough ingenuity to accomplish their end satisfactorily. It was far more effectual to pull apart the closing paragraphs, here, and make insertions, than it could have been merely to plaster these "Pauline" exhor-

tations against the end of such an obviously rounded and finished oration as this one. If the attempt had been made in that way, it would probably have failed of its purpose from the very first. The interpolator is careful, too, to make his additions fit into their places; vs. 16 is well fitted to vs. 15, the transition from 7 to 8 is not an unnatural one, and in both 1-7 and 16-18 there are reminiscences of the preceding discourse; see Wrede, p. 69, Von Soden, *Hand-commentar*, p. 10.

Wrede, as I have already said, believes that the author of the work changed his mind. He began with a discourse (chaps. 1-12); then, altering his purpose, he began in chap. 13 to turn his composition into a letter; and finally, as he neared the end of this chapter, he decided to imitate an epistle of Paul. It seems to me a sufficient reply to this to say that the author of the "Epistle to the Hebrews" was not that sort of a man! The work of Perdelwitz, also mentioned above, is useful at many points, and affords a valuable supplement to that of Wrede; but its fatal weakness lies in its failure to take into account the unmistakably Pauline character of the additions. Wrede's work at this point cannot be set aside.

I believe, then, that the concluding portion of the discourse, as it was written by its author, read as follows :

12 ²⁷ *And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that have been made, that those things which are not shaken may remain.* 28 *Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe ;* 29 *for our God is a consuming fire.*

13 8 *Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever!* 9 *Be not carried away by divers and strange teachings; for it is good that the heart be stablished by grace; not by meats, wherein they that occupied themselves were not profited.*⁴ 10 *We have*

⁴This verse 9 easily suggests certain Pauline admonitions, though it does not really contain any definite reminiscence of Paul (see also Wrede, pp. 67 f.), and it is possible that this fact first led some one to the idea of making the great apostle the manifest author of the document; that is, this one genuine verse may have served as the germ of the Pauline additions. The new material was added, naturally enough, at the end of each of the last three paragraphs; that is, after 12 29, 13 16, and 13 21.

an altar, whereof they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle. 11 For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned without the camp. 12 Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people through his own blood, suffered without the gate. 13 Let us therefore go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. 14 For we have not here an abiding city, but we seek after the city which is to come. 15 Through him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to his name.

20 Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep, with the blood of the eternal covenant, even our Lord Jesus, 21 make you perfect in every good thing to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

This is a conclusion worthy of the oration, and in keeping with every other part of it. The evidence is quite sufficient, it seems to me, to show that this, exactly, was what the author himself wrote, bringing his epilogue to a truly satisfying conclusion, and following it with a benediction which shows us again, in a final flash, the greatness of his soul, and the depth of his affection for his hearers. The question of admitting, as original, any part of the heterogeneous material in chapter 13 ought not even to arise. A writing which is unquestionably the work of a master, and which gives constant evidence of the care which he had bestowed upon its construction, has the presumption in its favor at every point of possible doubt, when once the fact of interpolation has been recognized. Every verse which my hypothesis has excised is, in fact, condemned by its incongruity with the whole composition as well as by its pseudo-Pauline coloring.

The work as thus restored is one in which there is no spot or blemish. From beginning to end it is thoroughly harmonious, moving always in the same high plane of thought, and expressed in language of singular beauty. Von Soden (*Comm.*, p. 5) well says that its author was a man of epoch-

making greatness, the only one whom we know to have been fully equal to the task of bringing the Alexandrine theology into the service of Christianity. But he was also one whose work was given the highest literary finish. It is to be noticed how at the very end of his homily he strikes the same note with which he had begun it. In 14, at the end of the sonorous opening sentence, he presents his introductory thesis, affirming the "more excellent *name*" of the Anointed One. So in the last words of the concluding sentence of the whole discourse, 13 15, he returns to the thought of "confession to his *name*," the same confession (*ὁμολογία*) of which he had spoken in 3 1 4 14 and 10 23.

Whether our "Epistle to the Hebrews" was originally composed as a formal disputation (diatribe), or as a sermon for actual delivery, is a question which cannot be answered with certainty. I incline strongly to the latter view, however, both because of the markedly oratorical character of the whole, and also because of certain significant phrases, such as those in 9 5 and 11 32. The attitude of the author, as one actually standing before his audience (at least in his own imagination, as he writes), is especially evident in 11 32, the passage already cited as containing the masculine form of the participle. "*The time will fail me*," he says, "if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah," and the rest. The writer of a diatribe has all the *time* that he wants; and his readers, if they find the discourse too long, can skip over whole chapters at their pleasure. But the preacher who is keeping one eye on the hands of the clock, or on the sand in the hour-glass, — who reads well the faces of his hearers, — knows what it means to have the time fail him. It is not a light matter.

I believe, then, that we have before us a Christian sermon of the first century; composed, it may be, while some of the apostles were yet alive; written to be delivered, and probably actually delivered. Some member of the preacher's congregation may have asked for a copy, and kept it for subsequent edification, as sometimes happens at the present

day. Or, the minister's own hand-copy may have been passed on through other hands, until it happened to be carried over the sea to Rome.

The nearest parallel to it which we have is the Jewish homily known to us as 4 Maccabees. This, also, is a very eloquent and carefully constructed composition of its kind, and a literary monument of the highest value. It has a style of its own which is widely different from that of its Christian counterpart, and was probably a diatribe rather than a discourse to be delivered. Both have this especially in common, that they were composed by learned and devout leaders of their people who were masters of the rhetorical art and of the Greek tongue.

In each of the two cases, moreover, we are given a fair glimpse not only of the orator but also of his congregation. The discourse is suited to the intellectual and spiritual plane of its hearers, and this was in either respect a very high plane.

At some time in the latter part of the first century, the magnificent sermon was brought to Rome, by some one of the many Christian emigrants or travelers. Where it had originally been delivered it is idle to guess; perhaps in Alexandria, at any rate in some one of the more considerable Greek cities. It was read, and learned by heart, and wept over; we can certainly not adequately imagine, at this day, what a hold the beautiful discourse must soon have gained among these earliest believers — strangers and pilgrims on earth — who had so few such writings to direct and comfort them.

When at last the dearest books of the church began to be put together, and the need was felt of setting apart the few which could be claimed as divinely inspired in an especial sense, it was felt in Rome that no one of the oldest Christian writings bore more plainly the stamp of divine authority than this precious document. It had for some time been anonymous, but must it not have been the work of one of the inspired apostles?

Gospels and Epistles were the two first-ranking divisions

of the Christian Sacred Scripture—the New Testament; the belief arose most naturally, almost of necessity, that this was originally an epistle, written to the church in Rome (where it was first made known) by the greatest of all epistle writers, Paul. This must have seemed quite plausible (for difficulties with the literary style would have had no great influence); and when the theory had once arisen, its value to the church must immediately have become apparent, for *only* as an apostolical epistle could this document be maintained in its proper place of authority. In Rome, it might possibly have been left just as it stood, without addition; but never in the other parts of the Christian world, where it had not been thus inherited from the very first years of the Christian community.

So a few sentences were added, or inserted, with the purpose of making clear the origin of the writing. It is remarkable with what reserve these additions were made. No address was prefixed; the name of Paul was not introduced; evidently it was felt that in the lack of absolute certainty that he was the author, it was better to be as cautious as possible. But the few personal words of the addition leave no room for doubt that an apostle sent this as a letter, and they aim to make it at least extremely probable that he was the Apostle Paul.

Whether the addition was made in Rome, and by a member of the Roman church, is a question which cannot be answered with certainty. The probability inclines very strongly that way, however. In that case, it is sure that the thing was done by some one man, or small group of men; for *the Roman church* continued to insist on the anonymity of the "Epistle," even long after the Pauline authorship was accepted everywhere else. The document in its expanded form was perfectly well known in Rome, and probably known there earlier than in any other place; but the old tradition of the unknown authorship persisted.

The time when the addition was made can hardly have been later than the middle of the second century, and it may have been considerably earlier than that date.

Harnack may be right in regard to the superscription "The Epistle to the *Hebrews*," in thinking that it was chosen simply because of the all-pervasive and very striking use of the Old Testament Scriptures, from the beginning of the composition to its end. It is, at all events, likely that the title, *πρὸς Ἑβραίους*, "To Hebrews," was prefixed to the writing at a very early date, and before the epistolary additions at the end were made.