

present day. The names and some of the ceremonies have been changed, but the ancient worship in its essential features and ideas still remains.

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MORE WORDS ON THE EPISTLE TO HEBREWS.

IN a paper in the EXPOSITOR for November 1903, entitled "The Epistle to Hebrews as the Work of Barnabas," the following results, amongst others, were reached. "*Hebrews* was written by Barnabas from Italy, probably from a seaport, whence he hoped to sail very shortly—accompanied, if possible, by Timothy, fresh from an imprisonment connected with that of St. Paul. This was in A.D. 62, in the spring of which year James, the Lord's brother, suffered in Jerusalem. It was, perhaps, his death at the hands of the Jewish authorities (suggesting, as it did, that toleration of Jewish Christianity within national Judaism was becoming a thing of the past) which precipitated the crisis in the communities addressed in this writing, and of which Cæsarea may be taken as a type." It is the object of the present and concluding paper to supplement and amend this closing description of the recipients of the "word of exhortation," and also to show what light may be cast by truer views as to this point upon the lack of opening address to the Epistle as we have it.

The plural "communities" was used in the above summary in a preliminary or non-committal sense, the writer not yet having made up his mind whether more than one community might not be before our author's mind in writing. On this point he no longer feels ground for hesitation. Not more than one community appears to be addressed; and, if so, it was most probably located in Cæsarea, the place in all Palestine which had closest rela-

tions with Italy. But was the whole body of the Christians in Cæsarea addressed, or only some portion of it? One is not here thinking of the possibility that there were Jewish and Gentile sections within the local Church, organized more or less separately in house-churches, such as probably existed within the unity of every Church of considerable size in the apostolic age. It is rather with different circles within Jewish Christianity itself (including full proselytes) that we have to reckon, in asking whether there are any signs that the Epistle was addressed to a smaller body than "the Saints" in Cæsarea as a whole. And here we are at once confronted by the strange wording of the final salutations, "Salute all your leaders and all the saints." Why this reiterated emphasis on "all," unless a section only of the community is being addressed? Westcott observes, in agreement with the patristic commentators, that the special salutation of the leaders "implies that the letter was not addressed officially to the Church, but to some section of it." In fact, we may say that its author's aim was to bring a certain section or group into line with the views and practice of the local leaders (*ἡγούμενοι*), and of that part of the Church which followed them loyally. Nor need we, perhaps, labour the point further, since critics as diverse as Harnack and Zahn are agreed in regarding the phenomena of the Epistle as pointing to a "house-church" (*haus-gemeinde*), such as we hear of in the salutations at the end of Paul's Epistle to the Romans.

It is true, of course, that there are many passages in which this does not appear, the principles in question being of general application, or at any rate to all Jewish Christians of that time and place. But the most distinctive and concrete passages imply that the readers were persons "in the same general circumstances of age, position and opinion" (Westcott, on v. 11). Further, the character of the precepts in chapter xiii. 1-6 "suggests that the society to which

they were addressed consisted of wealthy and influential members." This impression is confirmed by the references to their past conduct and experiences in vi. 10f. and x. 32ff. There we learn that they "had ministered to (the material needs of) the saints, and were yet ministering"; and that in the persecutions of the early days after their "enlightenment" they had themselves been "made a standing gazing-stock by taunts and afflictions," while they had also on occasion shared the lot of those similarly treated—only to a degree beyond anything they themselves were called to endure. "For with those in bonds ye showed fellow-feeling, and the snatching of your possessions ye accepted with joy, knowing that ye had your own selves for a better possession and an abiding one" (*γινώσκοντες ἔχειν ἑαυτοῦς κρείσσονα ὑπαρξίν καὶ μένουσαν*). Similarly they are exhorted in the present crisis "to bear in mind those in bonds, as sharing their bonds; those being ill-used, as being yourselves also in the body" (xiii. 3); and again not to be distressed about such loss as man could inflict on them through their earthly goods (xiii. 5f.). That is, they had not themselves been imprisoned,¹ but had suffered in reputation and material prosperity; and the way in which their endurance of the latter kind of persecution is referred to, suggests that it was what might have come home to them very keenly, had they not in those early days been lifted above all thought of material loss. Thus we gather that pressure had been brought to bear by Jewish persecutors differently, according as men were rich and respected, or poor and despised. And it is men of the former class only that are addressed by our

¹ "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin" (= "the gainsaying of sinners"), is one of many clauses which gain fresh aptness through the limitation of the circle addressed in our epistle. Another is the injunction, "follow peace with all," which most confine to "peace within the Church" (A. S. Peake, in *Century Bible*, *ad loc.*), without being able to give a good reason for its form, where we should expect "with one another." On our theory it falls into line with "salute all the Saints" (xiii. 24)—those of other circles or house-churches than your own.

author. How true this distinction was to Jewish Christian experience generally, and how apt the well-to-do—in contrast to their poor brethren—were to be swayed by unbelieving and worldly public opinion, we see from the analogy of James' epistle (e.g. i. 9f., ii. 5, iv. 4-6). James seems also to imply that it was not "the poor," "rich in faith," who found the trials of their worldly lot daunting, but "the rich," who are bidden rather to rejoice that thus they learn lowliness (i. 10).

Hence we conclude that the relaxed faith and morals depicted in our Epistle marked but a limited class of persons in the Church of Cæsarea, those, namely, who by wealth and status were most exposed to the enervating forces of worldliness, with its bias towards conformity both in religion and morals. Among such, once the earlier and enthusiastic stage of belief had passed, there was lacking the spirit of cheerful endurance (*ὑπομονή*, Heb. x. 36, xii. 1; Jas. i. 3f.). Instead of this there existed the moral *inertia* which tends to relapse into old ways, when these are favoured by local public opinion and are enforced by its steady pressure along the levels of secondary motive. The Master's warning as to "how hardly shall they that have riches enter the Kingdom," was being verified. Such a view gives new point to several turns of thought or expression in the Epistle. Thus, in the description of Moses' faith, there are touches which go beyond the Biblical narrative, and which were presumably inserted because of their special relevance to the readers' conditions. He "chose rather to be evil entreated (cf. xiii. 3) with the people of God, than to have a temporary enjoyment of sin¹; accounting the reproach of the Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt"

¹ Not "vicious self-indulgence, but those higher 'pleasures' of brilliant career and scope for his genius, innocent in themselves, but 'sin' for him, since duty imperiously called him to another service" (A. S. Peake, in *Century Bible*, *ad loc.*).

(xi. 25f.). One feels that the very strain in exegesis involved in the phrase "reproach of the Christ" in this passage has a meaning, being due in fact to the moral which the writer has in mind and wishes to bring home to his wealthy readers. The same special motive surely explains the reference to Esau as a "profane-minded" person (*βέβηλος*), in that he sold his birthright in the Promise for temporary physical relief (xii. 16). The like worldly-mindedness is an explicit topic of warning in xiii. 5f.

Against these were the men among whom had appeared the tendency to "desert the gathering of themselves together" (x. 25), a fact which had much to do with our author's writing in hot haste and with such solemn urgency. For, indeed, the appearance of drift in the circle most sensitive to the growing pressure of nationality was most ominous. Such men of wealth and position would also possess a mental culture above the average; and this would give real pertinence to the reproach as to their standing in need of teaching, when they ought to have been fit teachers of others (v. 11f.). Finally, we have here a full and sufficient explanation, first, of the fact that the writer should pen for his readers—and that at a time of spiritual crisis—an epistle so distinguished both in diction and in thought, an epistle which Jülicher describes as "far too learned for the average Christian"; and next, of the fact that he feels it wise, in closing, to refer to even such a discussion of his theme in deprecating terms, as though he too recognized its inadequacy and would defend himself on the ground that haste had forced him to be all too brief¹ (xiii. 22).

¹ The finished maturity of his thought—the very opposite of hurried improvisation—simply means that our author was writing on a theme on which he had long meditated, and about which he had often spoken, in more piecemeal fashion, at many an assembly for Christian instruction. He was now fusing together into fresh unity, under the force of an urgent emotion, materials already fashioned in his ministry *πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως*.

In a word, the circle of readers addressed in the "high argument" of this great appeal, was the social and intellectual aristocracy of the Jewish Christians in Cæsarea.¹ In this light, the comparative smallness of their numbers can be recognized without making the Epistle seem disproportionate to the need or to the issues at stake. The moral influence of their example would be enormous in their own Cæsarea and even throughout Palestine. A body of natural leaders of opinion must be kept from "falling away," if any effort on the part of their distant friend and teacher can avail by any means. To this end he adds the cheering news that Timothy, a name probably loved and respected in Cæsarea, had just been acquitted of the charge which had brought Paul to death—so that their enemies were not all-powerful, after all. Nay, he hopes to have Timothy by his side, when he himself is able to start on the journey that is to restore him in person to his readers (xiii. 19, 23).

Such a conception of the situation contemplated in *Hebrews* had been floating in solution in my mind for some time past; but there was yet lacking the crystallizing formula, the secret of the special bond between the members forming the circle so far defined. How was it that the Epistle could reach just those for whom it was intended? To whom exactly would it be addressed on the outside cover, whether it ever had a formal greeting inside, before its present opening, or not? The conception of a

¹ It might seem, at first sight, as though the foregoing argument in favour of a special circle within a larger church of generally, Judæo-Christian character had removed most, if not all, of the objections to Jerusalem as the home of those addressed in our epistle. But there remains one fatal objection. For in that case the Judaic character of the local church as a whole would be more marked than that of the special circle which could be addressed in an epistle so Greek in culture as well as in style. But the references to the "leaders" of the church in the last chapter imply the opposite. They were certainly not less, but more, liberal or Hellenistic in spirit than those specially addressed. This excludes Jerusalem, but not Cæsarea.

house-church, like that which frequented the house of Mary, Barnabas' own kinswoman, in Jerusalem, supplies the missing link and makes the situation realizable to the imagination.¹ Only here we have to imagine a rather uniformly aristocratic² house-church, drawn probably from the rich residential Jewish quarter of the city—a possibility for which the tone of James' Epistle touching "the rich" quite prepares the attentive mind.

A few further details may perhaps be gleaned from the closing paragraphs of the Epistle. Certain Italian Christians, after visiting Cæsarea on their way to or from Jerusalem, are likely to have brought the news which impelled Barnabas to write. Perhaps they had not met with the usual Christian hospitality from some of the members of the house-church in question (xiii. 2), and little by little had learned how things stood. One special element of danger in the situation, they discovered, lay in the fact that these persons of cooling faith and growing diplomatic

¹ How easy it is to overlook the simple solution, when it is not in terms of our own modern church life, is illustrated by the strangely inept remark of Jülicher (*Introduction*, p. 168, E.T.). "To interpret the *ἐπισυναγωγή τῶν αὐτῶν* as a separate assembly of this narrow circle [assumed by Zahn], is only possible if we assume a division of the collective community into parishes with settled boundaries." What of Romans xvi. 5 ff., esp. 10, 11, 14 f.?

² Have we not here the key to the difficult and much-debated phrase *ἐνπερίστροφος ἀμαρτία*? Hitherto the form of the adjective has pointed one way, viz., to the passive signification, "well-surrounded"; while the context has been thought to demand the anomalous active sense, "close-surrounding" (see Alford *ad loc.*). On our theory etymology and context are at one in favouring "well-surrounded," in the sense of "well-supported," "well-patronized." The writer says in effect, "Seeing that strenuous loyalty to the higher call of faith is countenanced by the support of the mighty dead, you can afford to lay aside every hampering weight, and particularly the sin that has worldly patronage on its side," i.e., is commended by the approval of "good society." That sin is worldly conformity in religion, the sin to which Moses rose superior. "Yes, even the sin that has strong backing" (in public opinion), would be a true, if colloquial, rendering.

reserve were already out of sympathy with their leaders as a body,³ and were disinclined to follow their counsels. Accordingly as soon as the news reached Barnabas in Italy, he felt constrained to throw all the weight of his authority into the scale represented by these leaders, who held fast by the more uncompromising traditions of the community as a whole (xiii. 7 f., 17). In so doing he was, on the one hand, conscious of the extreme delicacy of his task; for, should he fail to make his appeal quite convincing, the disaffected section was like the rather to esteem him disloyal to his own conscience and ancestral religion, and so reject his judgement altogether (xiii. 18, 22). On the other hand, he saw clearly that not an instant was to be lost in bringing some kind of aid to faith hard pressed and hesitant—so much so, that some had already ceased to assemble as Christians. That he did not straightway hurry to their side, as he wished to do (xiii. 19), must have been due to some very urgent duty on the spot. What this may have been no word of his reveals. But if our dating be correct, we may imagine that he had “words of exhortation” to speak in Italy itself to faith distressed by the hard problem of Paul’s death. As we have already argued, the place whence he wrote was not Rome itself (where Timothy probably had been and still was), but rather some seaport like Brundisium.

Finally, the theory has the merit of rendering a satisfactory account of a standing problem of the Epistle, the absence of any opening address. Here two alternatives present themselves. The writing may never have had any such address, as distinct from a mere direction on the outside. But the more probable view is that there was once

¹ Probably with some more than others. This seems the point of the words, “Salute *all* your leaders” in xiii. 24. Yet the leaders in general seem to have been united in a firmer attitude than that of those to whom the “word of exhortation” was addressed.

the usual address ending with *χαίρειν* (cf. Jas. i. 1), prefixed to the splendid opening *Πολυμερῶς κ.τ.λ.*, and that this mentioned the name of him in whose house the readers' gathering (*ἐπισυναγωγή*) was wont to take place. "To . . . and the church in his house, greeting," so it may have run.¹ Such an address, *from its very particular and restricted nature*,—so unlike the general character of the argument, which made the epistle singularly fitted for far wider use than that originally contemplated—would tend to fall away directly the work began to be copied for the benefit of others. The less of general significance there was in the address, the more surely it would disappear altogether in the process which made the Epistle quasi-catholic, as it is in our earliest MSS., viz., "To Hebrews." Had the original destination been more general, if it had been the whole church of some well-known city (and it would never have been written to an obscure one), then the address would not have disappeared any more than those of the various Pauline Epistles, or at least it would not have done so early enough to fail to leave behind any tradition² on the subject. The point may be illustrated from the partly analogous, and partly contrasted, case of the Epistle to the Romans. For there is a good deal of evidence, going back as far as Origen, which shows that "there were in circulation in ancient times a few copies of the Epistle from which all local references had been removed."³ Both Epistles became "general" in form, as they were in substance. But whereas in the case of Romans there were, from the first,

¹ Or even, "Barnabas to . . .," etc. See below, next note.

² The tradition of Barnabas' authorship, which I have argued from Tertullian's language did exist, may possibly point to the existence for a time in the Roman Church of a copy with the original address; but no tradition as to its destination has come down to us even through the Roman Church.

³ Sanday and Headlam, on Rom. i. 7; comp. Westcott and Hort, *Introduction*, "Notes on Select Readings," p. 108.

copies which preserved the original address, and a great church identified with the letter by its living tradition ; in the case of Hebrews, one at least, if not both, of these factors preservative of the original historical conditions, was on our theory absent. Here, then, as in other respects, such a theory¹ serves to clear up the mystery which is generally felt to hang over this great memorial of the later Apostolic Age, this witness to an interpretation of the Gospel of Christ not otherwise made explicit in its surviving literature.

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*OUR LORD'S REFUTATION OF THE
SADDUCEES.*

To fully grasp the force of our Lord's argument we have only to remember that He was a Jew speaking to Jews ; and that his argument was addressed to the Sadducees, who denied not only a bodily resurrection, but also any continued existence after death. It was, therefore, only necessary for Christ to show that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were still in existence long after their death. Difficulties have been introduced into the exegesis and a simple and logical argument has been rendered obscure and doubtful by forgetting these simple rules and by endeavouring to make our Lord's argument prove more than it fairly does, and more than was required to confute His opponents.

The force of the reasoning was already fully grasped by Origen, and recently has been clearly stated by Professor

¹ The present writer trusts he will not be thought to be exaggerating the importance of his own views, if he expresses the earnest hope that some competent scholar will take the trouble to point out any fatal objections to them, if such there be. After a certain amount of thinking on given lines, one loses the full sense of much to which they may do less than justice ; and only a fresh mind can here help by more searching, while yet sympathetic, criticism.