

## THE AUTHORSHIP OF HEBREWS

*Gene L. Jeffries, Th.D.*

History and tradition argue for Pauline authorship.

Eusebius wrote: "Paul's fourteen epistles (i.e., including Hebrews) are well-known and undisputed. It is not indeed right to overlook the fact that some have rejected the Epistle to the Hebrews, saying that it is disputed by the Church of Rome on the ground that it was not written by Paul." Further, the Apostle Paul, as a trained rabbi, was eminently better qualified to discuss all Temple matters, than was Peter or anyone else who is numbered among the possible authors.

Proponents for authors other than Paul include: Tertullian (Barnabus), Caius of Rome, the Muratorian Canon, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Eusebius and Ambrosiaster. Calvin opted for either Luke or Clement of Rome as the author, while Luther advocated Apollos. Many "nominees" left no writings of their own to which the writings of Paul might have been compared. Additionally, most advocates of authors other than the Apostle Paul have little basis other than that their advocates are someone other than Paul.

While Paul is universally acknowledged to have been the Apostle to the Gentiles, we must not overlook the fact that his commission included the Jews as well:

*"But the Lord said to him, 'Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings **and the sons of Israel...**'" (Act 9:15 NAU).*

At the same time Paul identified his own calling, he identified that of Peter:

*"...(for He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles)..." (Gal 2:8 NAU).*

There were two major problems in the New Testament Church:

First, the Gentile believers were being told by the Judaizers that it was acceptable for them to become Christians, but they must first become Jewish and learn to keep the Jewish Law. It was Paul, as the Apostle to the Gentiles (although his commission included both, Acts 9:15), wrote Galatians to clarify that such was unnecessary.

Second, the Jewish believers were being told by the Judaizers that it was acceptable for them to become Christians, but they must return to Temple sacrifices, i.e., the Jewish Law.

Peter, as the Apostle to the Jews, should have written Hebrews; but, Peter gathered and freely fellowshiped with Gentile believers until some Judaizers entered the gathering and noticed Peter's affiliation. Peter then withdrew from the Gentiles and commenced to fellowship with the Jews.

None of this escaped the notice of Paul, and he felt it necessary to openly challenge Peter's actions as hypocritical. For Peter's action struck at the very heart of the Christian Gospel of *Grace over Law*. Much more was involved here than mere personal embarrassment. It would have sparked a schism within the young Church. Both apostles were capable of fiery rhetoric; but, time and the work of the Spirit in both men, brought them to a faithful reconciliation. Peter later wrote,

*"...and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also **our beloved brother Paul**, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you..."* (2Pe 3:15 NAU).

By all accounts, Peter should have been the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The content of the epistle, however, demanded someone with an extensive understanding of Jewish Law, the Temple, and the sacrificial system. Paul possessed that ability through his rabbinical training; Peter did not.

The Galatian Epistle that noted the apostolic difference was written in A.D. 57. Peter's second epistle is dated A.D. 68, while the Hebrew Epistle was written in A.D. 69. Although the difference between the two apostles had long been settled, twelve years is hardly sufficient to wipe from the mind of the early Church the *thought of the confrontation*. Thus, Paul, virtually the only qualified writer for this message to the Hebrew Christians, wrote the epistle anonymously, and Peter was spared historical embarrassment.

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Words peculiar to Paul, used in Hebrews 13:

- 1) **Pray** (20 of 49 times in the New Testament are Pauline). **40%**
- 2) **Pleasing** – mentioned eight times: John (Jn 8:29 & I John 3:22). Six times by Paul (II Cor. 5:9; Eph 5:10; I Th 2:4, 15; and Hebrews 11:5; 13:21) **75%**
- 3) **Timothy** – The name is mentioned only eight times in the New Testament (II Cor. 1:1; I Tim. 1:2, 18; 6:20-21; II Tim. 1:2; Philemon 1:1; Heb. 13:23): All by Paul. **100%**
- 4) **Saints** – mentioned 59 times in the New Testament. All but 19 occurrences are Pauline; and only Matthew, Luke (in Acts) and John (in Revelation) mention the word. **67%**
- 5) **Italy** – mentioned four times in the New Testament (Acts, 3 times; Heb. 13:24, once). **100%**