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# CRITICAL NOTES

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## THE AUTHORSHIP AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF "HEBREWS"—AGAIN!

"HE BEING DEAD YET SPEAKETH"

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A NEW theory on the subject? Would even the few have the patience to consider? Has it not been a closed question for centuries practically, a millennium perhaps, longer possibly?

But, *Clausa quaestio*? Who shall say? With added evidence and mainly from the Book, might one hazard fresh conjecture? Interrogatively first, please. And tentatively and hesitantly. And, kind reader, your gentlest charity!

I. Why may not "the Epistle of Priesthood" have been written to priests, ex-priests, survivors among the "great company of priests" who "were obedient to the faith" in the midst of the Stephen episode (Acts VI:7), the specially privileged and once promising group now disposed to apostasy (V:11, 12; III:12, 14\*)?

II. They were addressed from Rome (the simpler interpretation of XIII:24); but—at Antioch in Syria, where they might most naturally have fled (Acts XI:19) "upon the tribulation that arose about Stephen"?

III. The time was at the imminent break-up of Jewish unities—"at the end of these days" (I:2), after the earlier pioneers of the new Church had deceased (II:3; XIII:7), after due season for the cooling of first loves (X:25, 32ff), after unrealized opportunities for spiritual leadership (V:11f); but—before the regular succession of sacrifices had ceased (X:1, 2); yet when the Christians' hope for "an abiding city here" had passed (XIII:14); almost (to use Stephen's and "Hebrews" ' reiterated cycle) "when forty years were fulfilled"—after the crucifixion?

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\*Mere chapter and verse references are to "Hebrews"; others have the name of the Bible-book prefixed.

IV. Was the book's immediate purpose to keep this priestly contingent from slipping back into Judaism (II:1, 3; III:6, 12ff; IV:1, 11; X:23, 25, 29, 39)?

V. The authorship was collaborate (II:3; IV:13; V:11; VI:9, 11; XIII:18)?

VI. Did Paul plan and (all but anonymously) authorize the book (Cf. the two "I" sections, XI:1-40, particularly 32; and XIII:19-25, especially 19, 22)?

VII. Did Luke edit (Cf. II Tim. IV:10, 11; and the nine first person plurals in the six passages of collaborate authorship cited above; and the four "we" sections of "Acts")?

VIII. Are these two responsible, as directing mind and not too liberal hand, for the epistolary character of "Hebrews" (the third of the book that is mainly personal and hortatory)?

IX. Was the remaining and major portion of the "letter" a "treatise" familiar enough to Paul in earlier days as probable Sanhedrin member and disputant (Acts VI:9, 11, 13, 14)?

X. Was it Stephen's high thesis—that in the course of God's progressive revelation Jesus was the Messiah of the Psalmist's vision (Ps. CX:1, 4; Acts VII:5, 6), the great high-priest not of Aaronic descent but "after the order of Melchizedek," the fulfiller of a passing dispensation of types, the beginner of a new and final and fully catholic day?

XI. Was the main message, then, not so much Pauline as, by priority, Stephanic?

XII. Was it, in a way, private—as addressed to a select coterie rather than to an entire church?

XIII. Might these two contingencies sufficiently explain the omitted epistolary salutation and usual (II Thess. III:17) apostolic signature?

XIV. Was the book, as it were, a voice from the grave? Did Stephen, like the first martyr, "being dead yet" (XI:4) speak through it to his former familiars; and, after the lapse of events, as a wonderfully accredited prophet?

XV. Even so, may they still have fallen away ("the

*hard word*" of VI:4-8) and the book thus naturally have failed of an early place in the canon?

Impossible? Possibly not!\* A well-known scholar and critic of our own day\*\* somewhat indirectly and perhaps inadvertently suggests a certain Stephanic complexion for "Hebrews" alike in the manner and in the matter. Of the parties addressed he says "their training must have been that of Hellenistic Judaism such as Stephen" (*sic*) "was trained under—liberal, biblical, and to a certain extent syncretistic." This much at least, then, toward plausibilities.

The chief objections to a share for Stephen in the authorship? A. His death long before "Hebrews" was finally shaped. B. The absence of any extant tradition to his partnership in the epistle. C. The book's late reception into the canon. D. Seeming differences between "Hebrews" and Stephen's "Defense." Can these apparent difficulties be reconciled with our hypothesis?

A. *Stephen was dead a generation, say, before the book was published.* Granted. But Paul would be interested in the Jerusalem synagogue of his own Cilician countrymen. Certain of these, loyal to the old faith, are recorded almost immediately after the accession of priests (Acts VI:7) as disputing with Stephen (Acts VI:9). Who more likely than Paul (Acts VIII:1, 3; IX:1, 2)? What would stir him more deeply than the talk of the possible passing of Judaism—the ceremonial, the ritual, the priesthood? At any rate he would be familiar with Stephen's thesis. As the lapse of years proved its correctness he would accede to it (Acts IX:29). He might even, as a sort of self-appointed literary executor, present it again, with fresher appeal, as somewhat anonymous, to the priestly converts who were scattered abroad at Stephen's death and finally faltered in their faith.

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\*Since the submission of this ms. the writer's attention has been called to Dr. Scott's noting of "curious analogies" between "Hebrews" and the Stephen speech. Cf. pp. 62-65, "The Epistle to the Hebrews; Its Doctrine and Significance"; by E. F. Scott, D.D., Professor of Biblical Theology in Union Theological Seminary; Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1922.

\*\*Moffatt: "Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament"; p. 449.

Paul's first recorded discourse of length (Acts XIII: 16-41) breathes the very spirit and not a little of the letter of his great "forerunner."

*B. There seems to be no surviving tradition of Stephen's part in the "Epistle."* Not so unnaturally, we believe. In fact, the silence may have been deliberate.

The evangelists of the Early Church would scarcely stress all his teaching, either with Jews as such or with the loyally legalizing Hellenists. The former would have cried them down. The latter are recorded (Acts VI:9) as disputing with him. And "they were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake."

The case with the Sadducees? They were the special persecutors of the Christians in the book of Acts. They were the favored party with their Roman rulers. Theirs, the high prerogatives and offices. Theirs, special privilege. To them the possibility of the passing of the high-priesthood, for instance notably, would be gall and wormwood.

The Pharisees? They might have connived, in some numbers, with Gamaliel in his "let-alone" policy of Acts V; might have countenanced the new religion as an adjunct of Judaism, till the Jerusalem Council of the fifteenth chapter—our last inspired record of a Pharisaic party in the Church; or, possibly, as a priestly remnant, till the catastrophe, foreglimpsed in "Hebrews," was imminent; but, as half-hearted Christians, they would always remember that Stephen was the first human leader charged with suggesting the breach with Judaism. Had not the sequel unfrocked them and made them renegades? *Persona grata?* Hardly! Not till well toward the end of the Apostolic Age (and the N. T. Canon) would the full truth of his premises begin to be apparent. Then, even the clerical converts might have been moved by his revitalized message, but rather through the hard logic of events than the personnel of the original preacher. Therefore, anonymity?

"The people"? How they had hung on Jesus' words! And similarly on those of the Apostles in the book of Acts—till Stephen's disputants "stirred up the people,

and the elders, and the scribes" (Acts VI:12). "The people magnified them" (Acts V:13). The early believers had "favor with all the people" (Acts II:47). The Sadducees were "sore troubled because they taught the people" (Acts IV:2); and resolved to forbid them further speech that their miracle and message "spread no further among the people" (Acts IV:17); yet "found nothing how they might punish them, because of the people" (Acts IV:21); and the officers of the same high officials brought the apostles but "without violence; for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned" (Acts V:26). And many signs and wonders were wrought by the apostles among the people (Acts V:12). And Stephen's great miracles similarly (Acts VI:8). Gamaliel was "had in honor of all the people" (Acts V:34). A score of references in the first half-dozen chapters hint the people's active interest and the Christian leaders' favor with them. In the remaining three-fourths of Acts Luke scarcely distinguishes the people from their leaders. The hostility of both parties is marked. So the Stephen episode is the crisis, hinge, turning point. Any subsequent mention of the first Christian martyr or his message would certainly antagonize the common people of the Jews.

And the Gentiles? They would, doubtless, regard Stephen's as a name of less authority than that of Paul or of Barnabas—the great missionary leaders of the changing Church. In doubt, they might be somewhat inclined to Clement of Rome—probably, like Mark, a Jew with a Latin name—as the early bishop of a catholic comity. These would likely be the favorite conjectures. Only one other name survives with a long tradition—that of Luke. He is the only non-Jewish writer in the Testament canon. He alone mentions Stephen. He writes for Gentiles. But he would be acceptable not least as linked with the traditional faith through Paul and as colleague and collaborator.

And the Alexandrian believers were, from the first, strong for Paul's authorship. And the Eastern Church in general acceded. Hellenistic bias, still? And the West-

ern denied; or, centuries later, acquiesced with reservations. As better informed? As more fully appreciative of the book's greatness? As eager for its canonicity?

Other hypotheses? Peter? Not his kind of Greek! Apollos, Aristion, Philip, Prisca, Silas? Later traditions, insufficient remains, ingenious conjectures. Clement of Rome, again? Copiously reminiscent of "Hebrews" he is, yes; and alike in the matter of quotations and allusions; but he fails to rise to its heights of thought and style, and he stresses different teachings; nor—*e. g.*, notably—would his acceptance of the "Phoenix" myth and his use of it as an argument and analogy for the resurrection lead to his final canonicity.

Origen's personal opinion was collaborate authorship—"the great apostle" plus an unknown editor and publisher. "The thoughts" were "Paul's"; but the style—"too good Greek." Well? Luke is Paul's best-known amanuensis and he was near at the last (II Tim. IV:10, 11). And Acts is the "*locus classicus*" for the Stephen story. The "Hebrews" vocabulary, too, is not un-Lucan. The Greek of these two is the best in Testament. Why not Luke for editor? From the word "first" (st. "former"), in Acts I:1, Ramsay has ingeniously conjectured the Evangelist's intent to write yet another "narrative." It is working the adjective rather hard; still, the Greek is able for it. But why the "intent" only; and why "narrative"? (The same Greek term is used alike of Luke and Acts (Acts I:1) and "Hebrews" (IV:13; V:11)); why not Luke for "Hebrews"? A third collaborator? Unguessed! But—were "the thoughts" "Paul's"? By adoption, yes. Originally, no. They were Stephen's in so far as the Bible record goes. And not only "the thoughts" but the manner. Stephen's "Defense" is forty-five per cent. quotations from the O. T.; "Hebrews," twenty-one. Excepting "Revelation," no other sections of the size in N. T. are so largely citation. Stephen says the old covenant came by divine voice, angelic word, providential manifestation. His "Defense" proper ends, "ye \* \* \* received the law as it was ordained by angels, and kept it not." *At this his hearers "gnashed on him with their*

*teeth.*" And he fails to arrive at the discussion of the New Covenant through Christ. But he does add his glimpse of "the heavens opened" and "the Son of man standing" (st. "sitting"; here only in N. T. As still a ministering priest; his redemptive work not yet fulfilled in all its dignity? So, Westcott) "at the right hand of God" (Ps. CX:1). *And at this his hearers martyred him.* "Hebrews" wonderfully supplements the "Defense." It presents the special and hitherto undetailed revelation "by a Son." Stephen formally ended with a reference to the covenant received "at the ordinances of angels." The first personal exhortation of the "Epistle" (II:1-4) reads:

1. Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them. 2. For if the word spoken through angels proved stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; 3. How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation? which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard; 4. God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will.

And I:4-14 argue the superiority of the Son's revelation to that of angels. And I:1-3 are apt transition from the "Defense" to the "Letter." Indeed I:1-2a are a wonderfully packed epitome both of the Sanhedrin speech and of the book. Then comes a summary of the Son's character and achievements, not too like that of the militant hero of Psalm One-Hundred-Ten, but deeply spiritualized. And the "Prologue" ends with the key-verse alike of the Psalm and of the "Epistle," a verse twice iterated in the former, five times in the latter. Briefly thus (our own translation):

"many-passaged and many-fashioned was God's revelation long since to the fathers by his ministers; and at the end of these days hath he made revelation to us by a Son \* \* who \* \* \* wrought purification of our sins and sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high."



The closing phrase? Key alike of the Psalm and the "Letter" and—the "Defense." It was Stephen's last registered word before the Sanhedrin. Then "they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and rushed upon him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city, and stoned him." He stood for Jesus as our high-priest-Messiah after the order of Melchizedek. Which is just the theme of "Hebrews"!

So Stephen was the man of a crisis-moment. He was far in advance of his day. He preceded Paul. He was the Pathfinder of the Gentiles. He foreglimpsed the old legalism as outworn, the divine revelation as manifold and progressive and catholic, the traditional Jew as a persistent irreconcilable and persecutor. Little wonder he was stoned. With the loyalist he would be anathema. We recall how slow the Apostolic Church was to mind "marching orders" (Mt. XXVIII:19, 20; Acts 1:8), how hardly it broke with Judaism—through Stephen, Philip and the Eunuch, Peter and Cornelius, Paul himself. Even "the Apostle to the Gentiles" spoke "to the Jew first." Why may not "Hebrews" have been a last loving effort to save his privileged countrymen to the Christian faith? With all his prestige he was bitterly hated. Much more, Stephen. His teaching meant the full and final break with the old orthodoxy. He was martyred. His death inaugurated the greater persecutions. His fame would wane. Not till prejudices were fully laid would he come into his own. That time, we believe, has arrived; and Stephen deserves the most serious consideration as *the main, though involuntary contributor of "Hebrews."*

*C. The book was not admitted into the canon till centuries later.* After the preceding paragraph this seems not so strange—if the message seemed ill-timed. If it was merged in that of later and better-known and seemingly more acceptable heralds, if the "letter" were private, if the parties addressed were priests and later fell away like those "of the Pharisees that believed" but dropped out of the Christian narrative after Acts Fifteen. It would be a message that failed—however gloriously—of its immediate purpose.

*D. The style of "Hebrews" seems different enough from that of Stephen's "Defense."* This difference does not hold true of vocabulary. Of that, later. But "Hebrews" is the best of Testament Greek. And the Seventh of Acts is far below Luke's usual high linguistic standard. "Hebrews" excels in classical idiom—in its nice use of participles and tenses, article and word-order, particles and conjunctions, general artistry of style. "Luke" and "Acts" fall scarcely below, save in two passages—"the Gospel of the Infancy" (Lk. I and II) and Stephen's "Defense" (Acts VII:2b-53). Here Luke is evidently using manuscript sources and has not felt free to adapt. And so the style is rather Aramaic than his usual Greek manner. He is doubtless following a Jewish report—whose we may only conjecture—of the Sanhedrin trial. So we need not look for all the Greek niceties of idiom. Even so, aside from the Septuagint quotations (nearly half the speech) and the reporter's necessary limitations for introducing them, the Greek is not so far below classical standards. *E. g.*, Acts VII:35-41.

One preliminary more. This theory of authorship and circumstances—how came it? Well, our thesis grew out of: (1) A special analysis, scholastically assigned, of Stephen's words in the Seventh of Acts; (2) the subsequent noting of this vocabulary largely intact in "Hebrews"; and (3) a consequent search for other resemblances and possible reasons for them.

First, then, in the matter of vocabulary. And there is considerable material here for comparison. We have a thousand and a score\* of the martyr's words as preserved in Greek. There is his long defense before the Sanhedrin. And three short utterances. Of these latter, one precipitated his death. The remaining two? High petitions: The first for himself—"the Prayer-Pillow of the Dying Saints"; the second, for his foes—"the Christ Entreaty for his Murderers." Nearly ninety per cent. of these re-appear in "Hebrews." That is: Print them in two colors. The recurring red, say, would total eight

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\*1022 (to be exact) according to the Westcott and Hort text.

hundred and ninety-four; the remaining black, one hundred and twenty-eight, *including repetitions*. Or, again, if we consider *different* vocables only, as recorded in Acts VII, Stephen uses some three hundred (301); and nearly seventy per cent. of these are also found in "Hebrews."

These proportions seem the more remarkable if we count the Seventh of Acts a transcript from the Aramaic, but "Hebrews" the best of Testament Greek; if we note that of the hundred (103) words lacking in the latter, some fifty (54) are found in Stephen's O. T. quotations; that of his three hundred, twenty-six are used by him alone in N. T.: that fourteen are found elsewhere in Testament solely with Luke, his reporter; also that twenty-eight of his three hundred are proper names; and that perhaps a dozen of the earlier words might have been deliberately avoided by a later writer for reasons of tact in addressing the Christians of "Hebrews." Suffice to say these groups are not mutually exclusive but overlap.

The words peculiar to Stephen and other writers in N. T. have their interest. Mention has been made of fourteen found elsewhere only in Luke's Gospel and in Acts. Stephen has two others used elsewhere only by Paul; and five others elsewhere only in Luke and Paul. He has yet five others found elsewhere only in Luke and "Hebrews"; and two others peculiar elsewhere to Luke and Paul "Hebrews." Not least, he has still other three peculiar to himself and "Hebrews"—not so small a proportion when we recall that the third Gospel and Acts contain but fourteen words common only to themselves and "Hebrews." More than a tenth of the words in Stephen's "Defense" are thus found elsewhere only with Luke, Paul, and the author of "Hebrews."

What does it all mean? Are these coincidences in some way significant? Can it be that Stephen, like the proto-martyr of "the faith chapter," still speaks—in mysterious wise, in character, in "Hebrews"? The query challenged search. Were there, possibly, yet other reminiscences? May we specify?

*Quotations.* The most casual reader of the Westcott and Hort text would notice the many citations (in distinctive type) from the O. T. He would observe, too, that

no section of the same length in N. T. contains as large a proportion of quoted words as Stephen's "Defense"; and similarly—with the exception of the "Apocalypse"—concerning "Hebrews." These three discourses have all a thesis to prove from the Book and with reference to last times. Almost half of the "Defense" and fully a fifth of "Hebrews" is citation. Indeed the first word of the latter, "many-passaged," strikes the key-note in method for the two treatises.

*Introduction of Citations.* Again, it has often been pointed out that Paul doesn't introduce his quotations like the "author" of "Hebrews." "The Apostle to the Gentiles" quotes with an "it is written" or "the scripture saith." It has not been observed that the "Hebrews" citations are introduced as are Stephen's, by "God saith" or "Moses said" or similarly; but regularly with a divine, rarely with a personal subject; and thirty-nine times out of fifty by some form of the verb "say." Nowhere else in Testament is the Stephen-Hebrews manner of introducing quotations so markedly distinctive. Westcott remarks the method as peculiar to "Hebrews" in N. T. but as found with Clement and with Barnabas.

*Dependence on the Septuagint.* It is also often said that "Hebrews" alone of N. T. books cites all but exclusively from the Septuagint. But Stephen, too, regularly does the same; and not a few of the apparent discrepancies in both are thus resolved.

*Introduction.* It is sometimes said that the third Gospel is the only New Testament book with a formal prologue. That may be a matter of definition. But there are striking similarities in the forewords of "Luke," "Acts," "Hebrews." They are of like brevity. They are both retrospective and prospective—from previous revelation to the current one of the book. They progressively present the Christ on earth in his humiliation, as effective still in the Church, as glorified at the right hand of God. That of the third Gospel is sometimes cited as the model Greek sentence of Testament. That of "Hebrews" is scarcely inferior linguistically for its later day. All are summary epitomes, markedly stylistic, sublimely thought.

*Tone.* There is much of the sternness of Stephen, the tactfulness of Paul—in the “treatise” and the “epistle” portions (*e. g.*, notably, VI:4-8 and VI:9-12); and of the fervid zeal of both throughout the book.

*Main Message.* Stephen’s thesis? We must take it chiefly from the “trumped-up” “accusations” of Acts VI: 11, 12, 13; the “Defense” proper of Acts VII:2b-53; his great declaration of Jesus’ high-priesthood in Acts VII: 56; and his prayers to him as his divine Lord—in Acts VII:59, 60.

He spoke “blasphemous words against Moses and against God” (Acts VI:11). True, of course, only by interpretation and with his interpreters; or, rather by misinterpretation and with his misinterpreters. Stephen knew Jesus came “not to destroy but to fulfill”; that there was a “fulness of time.” Not too plainly he implies: The Law would be outgrown; ritual and Jewish priesthood would pass; our high-priest is in the heavens. “Hebrews” asserts just this and at length. If these were “blasphemous words against Moses and against God”—they made the most of them!

“The indictment proper” is more specific. “This fellow ceaseth not to speak words against the holy place and the law; we heard him say this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us” (Acts VI:13). Stephen’s “much speaking” his accusers probably exaggerated. As to the charge let “Hebrews” supplement and interpret?

First, with reference to “the Holy Place”: “We have not here an abiding city”; “We speak” “of the world that is to come”; “the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem”; “For Christ entered not into a holy place, made with hands, like in pattern to the true; but into heaven itself”; “He dedicated for us a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.”

Second, as to “the Law”: “The law made nothing perfect”; “If that first covenant had been faultless, then would no place have been sought for a second”; “In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. But that which is becoming old and waxeth aged is nigh

unto vanishing away"; "For the law having a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of the things, they can never with the same sacrifices year by year, \* \* \* make perfect them that draw nigh"; "But he, when he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God"; "For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified"; "And Moses indeed was faithful in all his house as a servant, \* \* but Christ as a son, over his house; whose house are we"; "For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, \* \* met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him \* \* But without any dispute the less is blessed of the better"; "Now if there was perfection through the Levitical priesthood \* \* what further need \* \* that another priest should arise after the order of Melchizedek." In fact, Acts VI:13 and "Hebrews" might well be general statement and specific commentary.

The "Defense" proper is difficult. It is, probably, the least familiar section of size in Testament; hardly less so than "Hebrews" with the laity. The argument is necessarily masked. Even so, it was doubtless interrupted—just before its exposition of the revelation "by a Son." We believe he scored three main points in defense, uttered his great word under the impulse of his heavenly vision, and passed not unlike his Master.

*Point One.* The Old Testament revelation was progressive and varied. "Thro' the ages one increasing purpose." There came a call. The elect servant obeyed. He saw not clearly the plan. It slowly unfolded. In fulness of time it eventuated as ordained. The inspired record shows it so over and again. The heavenly instrumentalities? Special providences and divine manifestations, angels and prophets and chosen leaders, burning bush and covenant and tabernacle and temple, the great promise. "Many-passaged and many-fashioned through many ages was God's revelation to the fathers by his ministers." And so the cycle was rounded. It ranged from Abraham to Jesus. Its gradual disclosure was full and various indeed. You Jewish rulers should have un-

derstood. You have failed of the great Old Testament revelation.

*Point Two.* There is no single exclusively holy place here below. Not the Temple, nor Jerusalem, nor Jewry. God appeared to the father of our race in Mesopotamia, in Haran, in Canaan; to Joseph in Egypt; to Moses in Midian and through the Wilderness. Tabernacle and temple were accessory but incidental. Any place with God and his people is "holy place."

"The heaven is my throne,  
And the earth the foot-stool of my feet;  
What manner of house will ye build me? saith the Lord:  
Or what is the place of my rest?  
Did not my hand make all these things?

*Point Three.* Yours the Great Rejection. You have acted in character. You have always persecuted. And now—you have killed the Righteous One! Have I set aside the old covenant? It is you "who received the law as it was ordained by angels, and kept it not"; Henceforth?

*The Crowning Word.* Henceforth? The scepter has departed. Your law is outworn, your ritual your ceremonial. Yes, your priesthood. The Psalmist's predication is fulfilling. Henceforth there is a high-priest, eternal, in the heavens. His single sacrifice has wrought the blood atonement. He is not of the Aaronic line. He is "after the order of Melchizedek"—"without genealogy," "holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." Henceforth he belongs to the ages and the nations. True worship is spiritual. The gospel is universal.

This, we believe, is the chief tenor of Stephen's teaching—not too obvious in his "Defense" but fully elaborated in "Hebrews."

Have we made too much of Stephen's "Crowning Word"? The verse (Acts VII:56) runs: "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." Is it clearly a Melchizedekan reference? Might it not merely assert Jesus is Messiah? Peter

seems to imply no more in his citation of the moot passage (Ps. CX:1) before the Pentecostal company (Acts II:25, 34). Is this the Master's own stressing of the text before the high-priest (Mt. XXVI:63-66), with the added idea of judgeship? Did his other citation of it (Mt. XXII:41-46) before the Pharisees that last teaching day in the Temple do no more than raise "the unanswerable question" how "the Son of God" might be "the Son of man"? Would Pharisee, high-priest, Sanhedrin be innocent of any deeper, underlying suggestion? Would they be unfamiliar with the more specific allusion of the fourth stanza in "the High-Priestly Psalm":

"The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent,  
Thou art a priest for ever  
After the order of Melchizedek."

Why, then, should the "author" of "Hebrews" think it sufficient to make Stanza One—

"The Lord saith unto my lord,  
Sit thou at my right hand,  
Until I make thine enemies  
Thy footstool"—

his key-verse (I:3; I:13; VIII:1; X:12; XII:2)? Would not Stephen's *verbatim* Greek phrase, "at the right hand of" God, call up the kindred refrain of "the Melchizedekan Ode"? But there is a surer clue still. What did the accused mean by his word, "standing"? The Psalm says, "Sit thou." "Hebrews" cites the imperative directly once; substitutes an aorist indicative three times, "he sat down"—the earthly phase of his work accomplished; and finally—the argument fully established—a perfect indicative of existing state, "he hath sat down." What, then, is the significance of "standing"? Let "Hebrews" say (X:11, 12): "And every priest indeed standeth day by day ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, the which can never take away sins: but he, when he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God;" So the priest "stood" at service but "sat down" in dignity and honor—the task



achieved. With this interpretation, Westcott cites the "Apostolic Constitutions" as agreeing. Stephen would seem to imply, then, that in his day the new hierarchy had not as yet fully succeeded the old but was in process of fulfillment. Need we doubt that priests and rulers would fully sense his meaning? Hardly a favorite prophecy with them, either, would it be? This raceless, ageless, eternal type of omnipotent king-priest—would he not supplant the Aaronic line, abrogate Judaism, admit the Gentiles to equal privileges, make the Church catholic? This, we believe, was Stephen's "blasphemy." He did not make Jesus simply "the Messiah." The Sanhedrin was no longer persecuting to the death for this. There were countless "Messiah's" in that day. But he made him the fulfiller of the Melchizedekan prophecy. He made him priest—eternal, universal. A "great company of priests" had just become "obedient to the faith." The question of their relations with the mother church would arise—of the priesthood generally, of the high-priesthood particularly, of the succeeding Messiah-Priest.

But was the Melchizedekan tenet Stephen's peculiarly? The prophecy is distinctive. The name of the type-king is mentioned alone in Gen. XIV.; Ps. CX, "Hebrews." Till the martyr's day, the first stanza of "the Melchizedekan Ode" seems to be cited but four times in Scripture\*—twice by Jesus (as noted above) and the same number of times on a single occasion by Peter (as remarked earlier). The fourth stanza of the Psalm appears not to be quoted previously. And—despite the wealth of Old Testament symbolism—Zechariah VI:13 seems to be the only unequivocal, intervening reference to the Messiah as "priest." The twice-repeated key-phrase of "David" 's prophecy is used of Christ's regnancy not so rarely. Peter interprets his quotation as Messianic but not specifically as priestly-Messianic. He certainly did not too early accept its universalism; or thought the time for that phase of its fulfillment was not yet ripe. Stephen, then, is the first mere man of the early Church (as rec-

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\*Mk. XVI:19 is bracketed in the W-H text.

ords go) to cite and apply and seal the text with the "faith," "grace," "power," "wisdom," and "Spirit" for which he was notable. The sole surviving exposition in full of the Melchizedekan prophecy which we know might well be his. We mean "Hebrews."

Are there yet other Hints of Possible Connection? There are minor resemblances between the "Defense" and "Hebrews." *E. g.*, notably:

1. *Common Topics and Illustrations.* Promises and covenants and revelations, the divine plan and human resistance and the final fulfilment, the Old Testament dispensation at the ordinances of angels and the New by a Son—so run the two treatises. The storied tabernacle is a favorite and distinctive figure, and effective in the exegesis of the argument. It so appears in Testament only with Stephen and in "Hebrews." In the three Apocalyptic mentions it is millennial, supernal, glorified. Each discourse sets forth at length Abraham, Moses, Joseph as pathfinders of the old faith. Both treatises make much of the Ministry of Angels and the Provocation in the Wilderness.

2. *Kindred Paraphrases of Briefer Statements.* Some forty "Westcott and Hort" lines in "Hebrews" are expansions of narrative passages epitomized in the "Defense."

3. *Parallel Citations.* Westcott finds in "Hebrews" twenty-nine Old Testament "quotations" and fifty-three less obvious "allusions." The "Defense" totals nearly as many citations, and from practically the same book-groups, and in nearly the same proportions. According to the same authority, twenty-one of the "quotations" are peculiar to the "Epistle." Eight only are cited by other New Testament writers. Of these last, seven are found with Paul; and one of these — elsewhere. The remaining quotation occurs in Stephen's "Defense" and in connection with his fifty-word mention of the tabernacle. A dozen rare word—or phrase—allusions are common to both Discourses.

4. *Common Use of a Distinctive Title.* Jesus' favorite appellation for himself was "the Son of man." It is often

said no one else in New Testament speaks of him so except Stephen (Acts·VII:56). "Hebrews," however, cites Psalm eight, Stanza Four:

"What is man, that thou art mindful of him?  
Or a son of man, that thou visitest him?"

And the anarthrous "son" proves to be Jesus in the immediate narrative sequel.

Aside may we add it is hard not to find a suggestion of Stephen's name, too, in the above "Passage of the Title." Paul is an inveterate punster; and, not least, with proper names. The "Philemon" Letter, for instance, notably. "Stephen" means "garland" or "crown." Transliterated it runs, "*Stephanos*." The section twice contains the cognate verb in the forms, "*estephanosas*" and "*estephanomenon*." The Verses are Seven and Nine of the Second Chapter:

"Thou madest him a little lower than the angels;  
Thou crownest him with glory and honor,  
And didst set him over the works of thy hands:

"But we behold him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, *even* Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God he should taste of death for every *man*."

Jesus, too, was "crowned," "garlanded," "martyred," "Stephaned," with glory and with honor. In life and death they were not so unlike save in the essential difference. Stephen was no mean imitator of his Master. The verb in question is found elsewhere in Testament only in Paul's last Timothy-Letter which may have been a companion document (XIII:23). And the passage follows (a) the prologue, (b) the statement of the superiority of the Son's revelation to that by angels, (c) the first personal exhortation—all of which seem to connect so logically Stephen's "Defense" and "Hebrews." But this is, doubtless, over-ingenious?

And certain particular parallels and possible connections specially haunted memory and piqued conjecture.

*E. g.* The rare "*asteios*" for Moses' beauty, peculiar in N. T. to Acts VII and "Hebrews"; the infrequent "*entromos*," alike in the "Defense" and in the "Epistle"; "the Rest (of God)" expression in the two "Discourses" uniquely (for Testament); the "Joshua" mention, likewise; "the foot-stool of his feet" judgment-phrase of Psalm CX notably; the rare "*logia*" and the similar "living oracles," "living Word"; the crucial and reiterated "*cheiropoietos*" of God's dwelling-place.

And more markedly still: The "Hebrews"—Roll of the Faith—"Martyrs" recalled the Stephen-Catalogue of the Faith-Pioneers. The same great Old Testament Leaders were stressed—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and particularly Moses. As Stephen magnified the Exponent of the Law, so "Hebrews" exalted the Exemplar of the Perfect Priesthood. In fact, the combined "treatises" might well be called, The Old Covenant and—the New. And they might be interlocked with a threefold cord of thought: The old revelation by angels and prophets, and the new by a Son; the Mosaic leadership, and the Christly authority; the levitic high-priest, and the heavenly. Not least, the two "Discourses" are alike in their uniform avoidance of the word for "temple"; in their rare substitution of the term "house"; in their general use of "tabernacle." And VIII:2, 5 and Acts VII:44—with the one common quotation of the two "Treatises"—suggest the same reason. The fair fame of temples and ruling priests had waned. The reader of "Hebrews" can but recall the rival factions and their battling and barricading occupations of the holy house shortly before the city's fall.

Which brings us finally and formally, constructively and summarily to our thesis of authorship and circumstances for "Hebrews." Affirmatively this time, please. We believe:

*I. The letter was addressed to survivors among the "great company of priests," recorded in the middle of the Stephen episode as "obedient to the faith."*

The Stephanic narrative is intersected by a strangely

brief and unique record (Acts VI:7c): "And a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."

Such an accession would doubtless stir Jerusalem to its depths. Late in Jesus' life certain Pharisees are mentioned as indignantly asking (Jno. VII:48): "Hath any of the rulers believed on him, or of the Pharisees?" And later still we read (Jno. XII:42): "Nevertheless even of the rulers many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess *it*, lest they should be put out of the synagogue." Of such we recall notably Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. In the first fourth of Acts the opposition is different. The active persecutors are Sadducees and the "rulers and elders and scribes," headed by Annas and Caiaphas and "the kindred of the high priest," "being sore troubled because they" (the disciples) . . . "proclaimed in Jesus the resurrection from the dead" (Acts IV:2). Peter also had already cited in his Pentecostal address, as proof of Jesus' lordship, the key-verse of "the High-Priestly Psalm"; and the Sadducees would doubtless sense more fully its menace to their prerogatives. Of Pharisee hostility as such we read nothing in Acts I-VII. Indeed Gamaliel, a notable member of that sect and of the Sanhedrin, had officially advocated a "hands off" policy. The disciples were preaching the resurrection and keeping the Jewish hours of prayer. Perhaps the new religion might yet amalgamate with the old orthodoxy? Then—the accession!

Just what was Stephen's part in the episode? If there is anything in the order and implication of Acts VI:2-7 the new adherents came in under the influence of the Apostles' ministry, not mainly under that of Barnabas or Stephen. But the latter's Spirit-possession, wisdom, grace, power, faith had made him the early Church's great authority on the Book and on the office of the Messiah. Immediately after the priests' accession comes a still briefer statement of Stephen's wonder-working. Then (Acts VI:9) "arose certain of them that were of the synagogue called *the synagogue* of the Libertines, and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and Asia, disputing with Stephen. And

they were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake." What was the theme of controversy? May we not infer from the situation, the accusations, the "Defense," the sequel? The occasion would certainly bring to issue the mutual relations of Judaism and the new faith; and particularly, the status of the priestly believers. The malicious charges of Acts VI:11, 13, 14 asserted that Stephen spoke "blasphemous words against Moses and *against* God"; that he ceased not "to speak words against this holy place, and the law"; that he said "Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered unto us"; that, in short, what was then nearest and dearest to Judaism should pass. Stephen's "Apology" maintained that God's revelation had progressed from vague and intermittent messages to a full and perfect disclosure "in a Son." His last word before the Sanhedrin was his vision of Jesus at God's right hand in fulfillment of Ps. CX:1, 4. This precipitated his martyrdom. On that very day began "the great persecution" of Acts VIII:1; and the believers were "scattered abroad."

It looks, then, as if the key-verse of "Hebrews" (our oft-repeated citation from Psalm One-Hundred-Ten) was the *crux* of the matter; that the accession of priests brought to an issue their status and that of believers generally; that Stephen then declared, discussed, and defined the character and final significance of Christ's high-priesthood.

Who were the priests that acceded, how considerable an aggregate, and what was their part in the controversy? They could hardly be Sadducees. They were likely of humbler rank. They would be young. Their number was startling. The word for "company" (Acts VI:7) is the one commonly used of the "multitude" that attended Jesus. More definitely, it is used, without adjective, of the hundred and twenty in the upper room (Acts I:15). The five thousand that were miraculously fed (Jno. VI:5) were "a great multitude." Josephus tells us there were twenty thousand priests. This accession must have been a notable proportion of that total. Of their participating

in the discussion there is no record. Their position would be exceedingly awkward. They became "obedient to the faith" while the believers still adhered to Judaism. Even if they could not accept Stephen's teaching at its fullest they would still be lined up with the new religionists. Can we doubt they were "scattered abroad" with them?

With this theory, that the priests of Acts VI:7 were the parties addressed in "Hebrews," we find nothing inconsistent in the latter treatise, either in its personnel or its circumstances.

The adherents came into the Church not under Paul's preaching (they are never called "children"); but under that of early disciples (II:3); in a day of "signs and wonders and manifold powers and distributions of the Holy Spirit" (II:4. Cf. Acts VI:8); as confreres of Paul in some congregation (Cf. the half-hundred first person plurals of fellowship in the "Epistle" proper and the reiterated "brethren" and the once-occurring "beloved.")

They were a specially privileged class as "heirs of the promise" (IV:1; *et al.*). They ought to have become "teachers" through lapse of time since their conversion (V:12). As fully "enlightened" they would be in hopeless case should they "fall away" (VI:4-8). They had property to lose (X:34). They had "ministered" notably "to the saints and still ministered" (VI:10). They were urged to be "not lovers of silver" (a word used elsewhere in its privative form, only by Paul in N. T., I Tim. III:3; and, in its positive form, by Paul—II Tim. III:2, and by Luke—Lk. XVI:14—as characteristic of Pharisees); but, on the contrary, are exhorted to be "content with the resources at hand."

They were distinguished in their first love by good works (VI:10); and, particularly, by their ministries (VI:11). They had endured great sufferings, reproaches, spectacular indignities in their own persons and by fellowship with others; had suffered bonds and seizure of goods and joyfully, but not yet unto death (X:32-34; XII:4; XIII:3, 16).

In fact, we scarcely see how the "Letter" could have been addressed to others than priests. It has aptly been

called "the Epistle of Priesthood." Its subject is "Jesus, our High Priest." It would be most intelligible to the priestly class. Indeed we doubt if any could have fully entered into its high places without special Judaistic training of the highest order and a considerable Hellenistic residence. The argument is close and technical; the Greek, superlative for its day. The book discusses just the questions most naturally raised through an accession of priests, most menacing to the Jewish order, most embarrassing to the hieratic convert. If they could believe that Jesus was not only the Messiah, not a temporal King-Messiah, but a spiritual Priest-Messiah after the order of Melchizedek, they could rest content. But would they?

More tangible evidence? Ah, the hard question! "Hebrews," like Stephen's "Defense," is masked. The parties most vitally concerned would fully understand; others, only infer. But Stephen closes his "Apology" proper by a reference to those "who received the law at the ordinances of angels" (Acts VII:53). The epistolary part of "Hebrews" begins with "the word spoken through angels" (II:2). Immediately after the record of the priests' accession we read that "Stephen, full of grace and power, wrought great wonders and signs among the people" (Acts VI:8). And the "author" of "Hebrews" tells his fellow-churchmen they received their common gospel not at first hand but as "confirmed unto us by them that heard; God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by manifold powers, and by distributions of the Holy Spirit according to his own will" (II:3, 4). The circumstances of accession were similar.

Were the parties addressed in the "Epistle" certainly Jews? "For verily not of angels doth he take hold, but he taketh hold of the seed of Abraham. Wherefore it behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (II:16, 17). "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, even Jesus" (III:1).



The "brethren" of the two passages seem racially the same. Melchizedek has not yet been brought into the argument. The word for "people," too, is used specially of Israel. Indeed the word for "Gentiles" is not found in "Hebrews."

If only there was some definite allusion to these Hebrews of the "Epistle" as priests? Yet, in that case, how could the plan of the book be sustained—its anonymity, impersonality? But there are passages of length where the parties addressed are urged to act as priests still! For instance, notably, they are exhorted "to enter into the holy place" with their hearts "sprinkled from an evil conscience" and their bodies "washed with pure water" (X:19-22). This, in analogy to the Levitic consecration of priests and high priest (Ex. XXIX:21; Lev. XVI:4). So, "in a figure," at least, they are definitely spoken of as priests.

*II. The parties addressed were resident at Antioch and were addressed from Rome.*

The letter seems to have been written from Rome. Main evidence? XIII:24: "They of Italy salute you." Westcott argues the expression may mean either (1) "those who are in Italy" send greetings from Italy, or (2) those of Italy who were the writer at some other place send greetings. The former rendering is the simpler, the more usual, the more common in Testament, the one generally accepted by the Fathers, the more consistent with the compiler's imprisonment and probable circumstances.

The parties were addressed at Antioch. It was one of the three world cities of the day. Josephus for it. Rome and Alexandria were the other two. Antioch would be the natural rendezvous for the Jewish exile. Alexandria was too readily accessible from Jerusalem. Nero, the persecutor, was emperor at Rome A. D. 54-68. It is scarcely likely that Christians as notable in station as the ex-priests of Acts VI:7 would hie them thither. But among Antioch's cosmopolitan population Jews were most numerous—Josephus again—and enjoyed equal rights of citizenship with the most favored aliens; they received lavish synagogue gifts from their Italian masters; they

freely proselyted Greeks. Next to Jerusalem it entered most largely into the Early Church life. It was the Gentile "holy city," "metropolis," "foster-mother." The Acts narrative links it up closely with Jerusalem, the "deacons," Stephen, Barnabas, Paul, and —? With the ex-priests? One of "the Seven" was "a proselyte of Antioch" (Acts VI:5). On Paul's return to Jerusalem after his conversion and after his preaching at Damascus he, too, "disputed against the Hellenists" (Acts IX:29). It is the same strange verb used in Stephen's case, and only twice in New Testament, and each time by Luke—first of the proto-martyr and again of "the Apostle to the Gentiles"—and with the same class of opponents. It looks as if Paul were following in the footsteps of his "forerunner." Also, we read that those who "were scattered abroad upon the tribulation that arose about Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, and Cyprus, and" (if you please) "Antioch" (Acts XI:19). And "some of them, men of Cyprus" (Barnabas' home) "and Cyrene, . . . when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus" (Acts XI:20). Then the Jerusalem Church sent Barnabas "as far as Antioch" (Acts XI:22). "And he went forth to Tarsus to seek for Saul" and "brought him unto Antioch" (Acts XI:25, 26). The latter's first systematic ministry was here, "a whole year" (Acts XI:26). Here he made his headquarters and from here set out on his three Missionary Journeys. Here the disciples were first called Christians (Acts XI:26). Here came prophets from Jerusalem, and Agabus foretold the famine, and Paul and Barnabas returned with the great Antioch "Ministry" of help (Acts XI:27-30). Here the question of circumcision for the Gentile converts came to final issue and the Jerusalem Council's decision sustained the Antioch attitude (Acts XV). Here, too, Paul "resisted" Peter "to his face" for his Hellenistic-Judaistic waverings. And here, tradition has it, was Luke's native place.

It looks to us as if the Jerusalem refugees on Stephen's death would certainly include the priestly converts; as if they would most naturally go to Antioch; as if Paul took

up the mantle of his predecessor's teaching; as if the very mention of circumcision would be tactfully avoided in a letter to the church where it first became a burning issue and a closed question. Would it not?

More definite data for Antioch? We know the parties addressed in "Hebrews" had "ministered to the saints and still ministered" (VI:10). The Antioch offering is the only notable ministry of this kind we know. There was another "ministry" which Paul carried to Jerusalem but it was from the Gentile churches generally and the Apostle's itinerary seems to have omitted Antioch that time. Again, "Hebrews" has much to say of a Sabbatic rest (IV:1-11) which the Church was not enjoying but still hoped as a part of the promise. And we learn from Josephus (B. J. VII:III:3) that the Antioch Jews were about this time made to work on the Sabbath and the day's rest was dissolved. May these references be coincident? From the same reference we learn that Jews of this period were literally "theatrized" (Cf. X:33) in Antioch by seizure on a charge of firing the city and by a martyrdom of fire, though the latter class were not the parties immediately concerned in the "Letter"; for these had "not as yet resisted unto blood" (XII:4). The references certainly favor Antioch as the habitat of the Christians in question.

*III. The date of the book's completion was some time within the years 65-67 A. D.*

The "sacrifices" had not yet "ceased" (X:1, 2); and Josephus tells us plainly they continued till well into A. D. 70 (B. J. V:1; 3).

Nero died in June of 68. No later date for Paul's martyrdom seems acceptable. The great conflagration at Rome which first brought the Christians into special disfavor there occurred in 64. Some authorities date Paul's death this year or the following—the earliest plausible time for that event.

From II Tim. IV: 13, 21 (assuming the genuineness of the Pastoral Epistles) we learn that the great Apostle to the Gentiles, even with his demise clearly foreseen,

yet hopes to live on into the coming winter. Could this have been later than 67?

But Jerusalem is doomed. "The day" (X:25) is at hand. The old regime is "nigh into passing away" (VIII:13). "We have not here an abiding city"; "we seek after the city which is to come" (XIII:14). When could the writer have presaged thus definitely? Of course, he recalled Christ's prophecy. And for a decade before 65 the Jews had been defiantly, increasingly, turbulently rebellious against Rome. In the following year came Cestius' ignoble defeat before Jerusalem; and matters headed rapidly. Nero returned from Achaia. Vespasian was appointed governor of Syria, despatched Titus into Judea, followed with a great army, and arrived himself in the spring of 67. Just before his start, according to Josephus (as already cited), came the first of the two accusations at Antioch, the burning of Jews by a mob in the theater, the enforced labor of others on the Sabbath under the supervision of their countryman, Antiochus. Could these latter have been Christians? City-burning was the stock charge against them elsewhere. But would the enforced labor on the Jewish Sabbath have irked them unduly? What if they had been priests and were neglecting "the assembling of themselves together" (X:25) with the other Christians? What if the attempt were being made to coerce them back into Judaism—the very "falling away" against which "Hebrews" inveighs? News of this persecution would reach Paul at Rome by mid-year of 67 at the latest. He would naturally and bluntly write them that the only "Sabbath rest" they could hope was far different (III:7—IV:11). From Josephus again we learn that this accusation of a plot to burn the city hung over "the Jews that remained" (B. J. VII:III; 2) till the end of the war; that they were "in danger of perishing" (the same reference); that when Jerusalem was taken the Antiochians besought Titus' permission to expel them or to annul their privileges (B. J. VII:V; 2); that the only city of size to which the "author" of "Hebrew" could have written, "ye have not yet resisted unto blood" (XII:4), was Antioch (B. J. II:XVIII; 5).

But "the terrible fear" was present even here and memorably in 67 and again about 70. Can it be that the writer of "Hebrews" refers to the earlier phase of this terror in XIII:10-15? The passage is commonly explained as urging the definite separation from Judaism, but, to our seeming, the submission urged is rather to expected martyrdom, similar to Christ's, "outside the gate" (Vv. 12, 13, notably).

There is yet another corroboration of the 67 date if we assume Paul as alike the planner, framer, and compiler of "Hebrews" and the author of Second Timothy. Between the two certainly lies something of an interval. In the former the writer hopes release and a return with Timothy (XIII:23). In the latter he awaits only his crowning (II Tim. IV:6-8), the winter's chill, and a brief respite for "the books, especially the parchments" (II Tim. IV:13, 21). What if the last-named were his Hebrew Scriptures and he wished to compare them with the Septuagint quotations of "Hebrews"? Might the presence of seeming discrepancies hint the lack of such comparison, Timothy's too-late arrival, and the close of the year 67 as the date of Paul's passing?

*IV. The immediate purpose of the book is to save from apostacy a certain privileged group within some unnamed Christian community.*

The first personal words (II:1ff.) are fundamental. "Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the words that were heard, lest haply we drift away *from them.*" The lapse feared was not into paganism but into Judaism. The imagery, the whole ground of appeal is eminently Hebraistic. But these Jews must have been also vigorously Hellenistic.

Their chief peril? Unbelief and hardening of the heart (III:12, 13); and the falling short of the only Sabbath rest longer available (IV:1, 11), the eternal peace of "the heavenly Jerusalem." And there is an added and single and general admonition not to be "carried away by divers and strange teachings" (XIII:9). The awful warning of "the Privileged Backslider" (VI:4-8) is held over them. Stephen's stressed illustration of the unbe-

lieving and hard-hearted Israelites in the Wilderness is presented at length (III:7—IV:11). And by way of inspiration "the Glory Roll" of the Faith Martyrs of the Old Testament is unscrolled (XI:1-40).

Their main stumbling-block? That Jesus was our High Priest after the order of Melchizedek? At any rate it is "the chief point" (VIII:1) in the discourse. It occupies, particularly, V to X inclusive. The first personal command of the book (III:1) is to "consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, even Jesus." He is their sole hope of help in the crisis time (IV:14-16). He is the perfect antitype (VII:26). He is the "new and living way into the holy place" (X:19-23).

How far had they lapsed? And we shall be less tactful than the "author" in our particularizing.

1. They had grown cold and indifferent. "Ye are become dull of hearing; ye ought to be teachers; ye are still babes in Christ; ye have need of milk and not of solid food" (V:11-14). "Press on; lay not again the old foundations" (VI:1, 2). "Show diligence; be not sluggish, but imitators of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (VI:11, 12).

2. They had grown neglectful of good works and fellowship and Christian graces. "Consider one another to provoke unto love and good works" (X:24). "Forsake not our own assembling together" (X:25). "Follow after peace with all men and after sanctification" (XII:14). "Have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe" (XII:28). "Let love of the brethren continue" (XIII:1). "Forget not to show love unto strangers" (XIII:2). "Offer up praise to God continually" (XIII:15). "Do good and to communicate forget not" (XIII:16).

3. They had grown worldly. "Lay aside the sin which doth so easily beset you" (XII:1). "Let marriage be esteemed not slightly" (XIII:4). "Be not gain-seeking" (XIII:5).

4. They had grown insubordinate. "Let there be no root of bitterness" (XII:15). "Remember them that had

the rule over you" (XIII:7). "Obey them that have the rule over you" (XIII:17). "Submit to them" (XIII:17).

5. In the imminence of "the Day" they are specially exhorted to courage, action, endurance.

"Give diligence" (IV:11, VI:11). "Be bold" (III:6; IV:16; X:19, 35; XII:25). "Hold fast" (III:6, 14; IV:14; VI:18; X:23).

"Press on" (VI:1). "Draw near" (IV:16; X:22). "Run the race" (XII:1).

"Endure" (VI:11, 19, 20; X:36; XII:1-3). "Endure unto the end" (III:14; VI:11). "Endure chastening (XII:5-13). "Endure his reproach even without the gate" (XIII:12,13).

6. And the "author" feels forced to crave some personal favors. "Remember them that are in bonds, them that are ill-treated" (XIII:3). "Pray for us" (XIII:18). "Bear with the word of exhortation" (XIII:22). "Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints" (XIII:24).

V. *The authorship is collaborate.*

There are some four score first person plurals (exclusive of the formal quotations) in the book. These are not obviously rhetorical—the editorial "we." Paul is not given to that. Seventy, say, of these plurals link the writer or writers with the intended recipients as of the same number, company, fellowship. But the remaining nine are distinctive and constitute a sturdy argument for collaborate authorship. In seven of these instances the first plural is set over against the second plural. The writers and the readers are thus directly contradistinguished. "Pray" (*ye*, the parties addressed) "for us" (the italics are ours) "for *we* are persuaded that *we* have a good conscience, desiring to live honorably in all things" (XIII:18). "And *we* desire that each one of *you* may show the same diligence unto the fulness of hope even to the end" (VI:11). "But, beloved, *we* are persuaded better things of *you*, and things that accompany salvation, though *we* thus speak" (VI:9). And the last "*we*" above is plainly of authorship or editorship. And so it is in the remaining cases. May we use our own trans-

lations in part here as nearer the Greek? "For not unto angels did he subject the world to come, concerning which *we* are to speak" (II:5). Is this the premise of a general subject for the book? Again: "And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him to whom *we* make our treatise" (Literally, "word"; commonly—"narrative," "argument," "discourse," "book") "relate" (IV:13). Here again is hint of the book's subject. Finally: "To whom" (Melchizedek) "*we* make our treatise relate, and a long treatise it is and difficult of interpretation, seeing *ye*" (again, the contradistinction) "are become dull of hearing" (V:11). And the book has arrived at its main subject.

VI. *The chief framer, planner, and compiler of the book was Paul.*

Besides the "we" passages so frequently interspersed throughout "Hebrews," there are two notable "I" sections.

One is the final word—salutations, petitions, benediction (XIII:18-25). The writer speaks familiarly but with authority. He assumes the main responsibility for the hortatory portions of the book. The passage is quite in the Pauline manner—except for its anonymity! With the exception of its one Old Testament quotation it is a veritable mosaic of the great Apostle's letter-endings. In it the first person singular appears four times. "And *I* exhort you the more exceedingly to do this," (pray for us) "that *I* may be restored to you the sooner" (XIII:19). "But *I* exhort you, brethren, bear with the word of exhortation; for *I* have written unto you in few words" (XIII:22).

The other "I" section is the familiar Eleventh Chapter, the rhetorical climax of the main thesis. In Verse Thirty-two we read: "And what shall *I*" (our italics) "more say? for the time will fail *me*," etc. From the adverb we infer the whole chapter as Paul's since the first personals here are not emphatic in the Greek. And who could speak with finer authority on the topic than the familiar exponent of "salvation by faith"? What nobler



tribute could he pay to the man of faith who was his martyred predecessor?

*VII. The editing hand was Luke's.*

"Hebrews" resemblance in style to the third Gospel and to "Acts" has often been remarked. "The beloved physician" alone (II Tim. IV:11) was with Paul at the last. And the four "we" sections of "Acts" are now generally accepted as the collaboration of the two. Why not the nine references to joint authorship in "Hebrews"?

*VIII. Paul and Luke, then, are responsible for the epistolary portion.*

The book shows a fairly distinct cleavage.

It is often said that "Hebrews" is rather "treatise" than "epistle." It would be more nearly correct to admit it is both. It is the great theological discourse of the ages on the atonement, yes; but with a direct application of the same added for a particular needy group.

The general subject of the entire book is "the World that is to Come" (II:5), "the Heavenly Jerusalem," the sole remaining "Rest," as the writers viewed it, of the intended readers.

Two-thirds, say, of the five thousand words constitute the argument proper. They have to do with Jesus (IV:13); and, in general, as our Messiah. More specifically and fully they present him as our High Priest after the Order of Melchizedek (V:10; VIII:1; III:1).

The remaining third is the *argumentum ad hominem*, the direct application of the teaching, and is chiefly personal and circumstantial and practical, hortatory and monitory. It presses its doctrine on the purposed recipients as the antidote for their spiritual condition. Their faults as a special company proceed from rejection of the main dogma. Its acceptance is fundamental to their stabilizing. The sixteen hundred words (*circa*) of this division are "the word of Exhortation" (XIII:22). They include the last chapters (XII, XIII) entire and the numerous shorter sections, closely interwoven throughout the book, but commonly recognizable by the first or second person plurals. For this portion of "Hebrews"—the "Letter" proper—the directing mind assumes large responsi-

bility (XIII:22). "But *I*" (ours, the italics) "exhort you, brethren, bear with the word of exhortation; for *I* have written" (lit., "I write an epistle") "unto you in" (relatively) "few words."

*IX. The "treatise" portion would be familiar enough to Paul from earlier days.*

We have seen that the great teaching of the book was not Paul's originally. It was only his by succession or adoption. It so became his notably and perhaps with some elaboration as "the Apostle to the Gentiles." At the first he probably disputed it with its chief proponent. He may have heard the latter's defense before the Sanhedrin. He might even have reported it to Luke. And he aided and abetted in the death of the accused.

*X. The great teaching of the book was Stephen's special tenet.*

Jesus, our High Priest after the Order of Melchizedek! We have argued the rarity of this thesis in the Old Testament—the infrequent mention of the personal prototype's name even, the added suggestions of Psalm One-Hundred-Ten, the otherwise solitary mention of Jesus as priest in Zechariah, the Master's double stressing of the classic prophecy, Peter's failure to arrive at its full interpretation. Then Stephen probably declared, discussed, and defined the character and final significance of Jesus' high-priesthood. At least he made it "the Crowning Word of his 'Defense.'" And he was martyred for it.

*XI. The main message, then, was Stephanic rather than Pauline.*

The conclusion follows the preceding argument. Let the statement suffice here.

*XII. The book was in a way private.*

It was mainly a personal matter between Paul and the slipping Jewish Christians addressed. It was a last appeal to certain of his countrymen. They did not constitute an entire church. They were a special class. They are particularly distinguished from their "leaders" (XIII: 7, 17, 24), and from the "saints" (XIII:24).

*XIII. These two contingencies might sufficiently explain the book's anonymity.*

"Hebrews" lacks the usual epistolary greetings; also the customary (II Thess. III:17) apostolic signature. And naturally enough, if Paul was not the pioneer of its principal teaching and if the plea was tactfully, tenderly private.

*XIV. And so "Hebrews" was expressed with subtler appeal.*

It was, as it were, a voice from the grave. The first Christian martyr, "being dead, yet speaketh" (XI:4). The ex-priests, thus addressed, would realize in Stephen a great prophet. "The Galilaeen" had "conquered"; and, after the forty crucial years so curiously iterated as wilderness experience (III:9, 17; Acts VII:23, 30, 36, 42), Jerusalem had proved to be not "an abiding city." The truth must have awed them, however reluctant.

*XV. Even so, did the message fail of its immediate purpose?*

We believe Paul foresaw it would ("the hard word" of VI:4-8). And, again, since it did not attain early canonicity. And, too, because of its anonymity. And because the Jew was acting in character and so persisted in the great refusal.

This last word. The title in its oldest and simplest existing form runs ΠΡΟΣ ΕΒΡΑΙΟΥΣ. Change two like letters, as copyist (or meddler (?)) might, and the original inscription may have stood ΠΡΟΣ ΙΕΡΑΙΟΥΣ. We find ΙΕΡΑΖΟΜΑΙ, "serve as priest"; and ΙΕΡΑΟΜΑΙ, "be priest." ΙΕΡΑΙΟΣ would be the corresponding "verbal" adjective but the form seems non-extant. May we still hope its discovery in some-unscrolled papyrus? If so, would not our thesis be approximately established—that "the Epistle of Priesthood" was addressed "To Priestly Men" or "To Them That Had Served As Priests"?