

THE OLDEST CHRISTIAN SERMON.

(HEBREWS III. AND IV.)

UP to the present time but one passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews has been brought under suspicion of being an addition to the original epistle. It is the passage at the close, where Overbeck (*Zur Geschichte des Kanons*, 1880, p. 15 f.), Lipsius (*Göttinger Gelehrte Anzeigen*, 1881, p. 359 ff.), and W. Brückner (*Die chronologische Reihenfolge in welcher die Briefe des Neuen Testaments verfasst sind*, 1890, p. 36, 248, note 1; cf. also Harnack, *Texte und Untersuchungen*, II., 1, 2, 1882, p. 105 f., and *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, ³I., 1894, p. 345 f., 441) have proposed striking out xiii. 22-25; while Weizsäcker (*Das apostolische Zeitalter der christlichen Kirche*, 1892, p. 473) rejects as an interpolation even verses 18-24; and K. R. Köstlin ("Ueber den Hebräerbrief," in *Theologische Jahrbücher*, 1854, p. 433, note 1) suggested that verse 23 was an interpolation, introduced for the purpose of claiming Pauline authorship for the letter. In reply to Köstlin's argument one has but to ask why the interpolator did not make his object clearer; and the same objection holds against the first-mentioned view, according to which the whole conclusion is supposed to have been added for this same purpose.¹ Moreover, as Von Soden ("Der Hebräerbrief" in *Jahrbücher für protestantische Theologie*, 1884, p. 436 ff.) has shown, these verses, even if we suppose the epistle to have been written after A.D. 70, contain nothing else to arouse suspicion and are doubtless genuine.

On the other hand, an introduction to the epistle must have originally existed and have fallen away (cf. the refer-

¹ This objection is valid also against the proposal to refer the "epistola ad Alexandrinos, Pauli nomine ficta ad hæresem Marcionis" (*Fragm. Murat.*, 64 f.) to our Epistle to the Hebrews; cf. Holtzmann, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, ³1892, p. 294, note 1; Zahn, *Geschichte des Neutestamentlichen Kanons*, 1888, I., p. 288; Kuhn, *Das Muratorische Fragment*, 1892, p. 83.

ences given in Holtzmann's *Einleitung*, p. 303). Von Soden's hypothesis (p. 651 f.) of an original encyclical address, which was left out in their copies by the several churches, and so has perished, has no support in the epistle itself, not even in xiii. 24. For if the epistle was addressed only to the Church in Rome, it could very well be that οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰταλίας, who lived in the same place where the writer was then staying, or who had fled thither for fear of an extension of the persecution beyond the limits of Rome, should send greetings to the honoured and at the moment sorely oppressed Church of the capital.

Except, however, for the falling away of the address with the name of Rome, no one has yet shown that our λόγος παρακλήσεως is not preserved in its original form.

We cannot, however, expect the unity of the epistle to remain long thus uncontroverted. When the Pauline epistles have been completely dissected by the Dutch critics, the Epistle to the Hebrews will no doubt meet the same fate; for there is no lack of starting points for theories of composition. Von Soden (p. 655) has suggested that the chief part of the epistle may consist of homilies of the author. Many passages in chapters vii.—x. could be omitted without hurting the connection of thought. Especially have ii. 1-4, iii. 6-iv. 13, and v. 11-vi. 20, long been felt to interrupt the progress of the thought (Holtzmann, *Einleitung*, p. 292 f.). But the case in the first and third of these passages is different from that in the second.

ii. 1-4 follows naturally upon chapter i., and is necessary in order to explain the mention of the angels; for this mention is made, not by way of a polemic against Essene worship of angels (as Pfeleiderer, *Das Urchristentum*, 1887, p. 626, 631, still thinks), but the argument is directed against the service of the Law, which in ii. 2 is referred to the angels. Likewise after the exhortation to hold fast to that which was heard the writer proceeds, quite to the point: "For not unto angels

did God subject the world to come, but unto Christ." (Further, see Kurtz, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 1869, p. 89.)

Again, the third of the three above-mentioned passages comes at a point where the writer has, for the first time, formulated his theme, and so had occasion to halt for an instant and urge his readers with threatenings to special attention. In the same way the passage beginning in chapter vii., and treating of the superiority of Christ over the Old Testament high priests, is a thoroughly suitable foundation for the great description of the Christian hope as a sure and steadfast anchor in all the storms of life (vi. 19), but is hardly suited to give a reason for the exaltation of Christ through His suffering (v. 7 ff.; cf. ii. 10).

These two passages, therefore (ii. 1-4 and v. 11-vi. 20), cannot be separated from the context, however much they may at first look like digressions.

Quite otherwise is the case with iii. 7-iv. 13, which Weiss (*Handbuch über den Brief an die Hebräer*, 1888, p. 99; cf. also Von Soden, *Handcommentar zum Neuen Testament*, III. 2, 1892, p. 33) has called "a homily on Psalm xciv." Chapter iii. 7, it is true, connects with what precedes without any seam, but iv. 14, where a new paragraph is often very properly made to begin, refers back, as the commentators say, to ii. 17, or, in other words, stands in no connection whatever with what precedes, or even with iii. 1-6. Calvin (*In omnes Pauli apostoli epistolas commentarii*, 1831, II., pp. 403, 416) saw fully the difficulty, and tried to show that iii. 1-6 is a representation of Christ as *apostolus* and *doctor*, in contrast with which stands the description of Him from iv. 14 on as *sacerdos*. But this interpretation has been, so far as I can find, abandoned by all later exegetes, and the last important commentator on Hebrews, Westcott (*The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 1889, p. 72) remarks that chapters iii. and iv. form a digression. Let us examine this statement more closely.

In the first place, iii. 1 does not, as Tholuck (*Commentar zum Brief an die Hebräer*, 1850, pp. 132, 202) thinks, mean "therefore hold fast to the confession," which would make a suitable sequel to ii. 17 f., but "consider the apostle and high priest of our confession, Jesus Christ." This "considering" might have a practical aim, as in xii. 2, but, in fact, although Calvin (p. 403) thinks otherwise, what follows shows that it is to have a theoretical purpose. But if the verse is thus not a practical exhortation, but a rhetorical form for the sake of keeping up the readers' interest (cf. Von Soden, *Handcommentar*, p. 7), it is quite impossible that it should be connected by *ὁθεν* with what precedes. For, in spite of the repetition of *πιστός*, from the dignity of a merciful and faithful high priest there does not follow (at any rate in any such direct way as that in which the incarnation follows from the need of redemption on the part of the *σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ*) fidelity to his Creator, but the fidelity to the Creator is a second and different point, in addition to the first (cf. Westcott, p. 56 f.). Moreover, the designation *ἀπόστολος* for Jesus, although it may to be sure be regarded as prepared for (not, as Von Soden, p. 8, thinks, by i. 4-14, but) by ii. 3 (Kurtz, p. 115; cf. Delitzsch, *Commentar zum Brief an die Hebräer*, 1857, p. 103), occurs nowhere else in the Epistle, and the address, *ἀδελφοί*, which here might be suggested by ii. 11 ff. (Bengel, *Gnomon N. T.*, 1860, p. 569; Westcott, p. 73), does not occur, except in iii. 12, until the practical part of the Epistle, x. 19, xiii. 22. The word *οἶκος*, too, is used in different senses in the practical part and in our passage. In x. 21 occurs the expression *ἱερέως μέγας ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον τοῦ Θεοῦ*, with reference to Jesus, and we are compelled by the preceding *ἀγρᾶ*, and by the whole connection, to take *οἶκος* of the heavenly house of God, although Weiss (p. 263 f.) is led by iii. 6 to think of the earthly house. In iii. 6 the earthly house is indeed meant, for Moses is said to have been a faithful servant in it, and, according to ch. ix.,

the earthly high priests, and therefore Moses as well, were associated only with the first tabernacle. Is it, however, probable that in the same piece of writing the expression should be used in two senses which cannot possibly be harmonized? (This in opposition to Delitzsch, p. 487 f.) One might appeal to the double sense in which the author has used *σκηνή*, but in these cases *ἀληθινή* (viii. 2) or *μείζων καὶ τελεωτέρα οὐ χειροποίητος* is added, so that in xiii. 10 *σκηνή* standing alone must refer to the Jewish sanctuary. (This in opposition to Ritschl, "Über die Leser des Hebräerbriefs," in *Studien und Kritiken*, 1866, p. 97; Von Hofmann, *Der Schriftbeweis*, ² II. 1, 1858, pp. 185, 457; Kurtz, p. 423; Zahn, art. "Hebräerbrief," in *Herzog's Realencyclopädie*, ² V., 1879, p. 662; Von Soden, pp. 13, 101 f.) But even if that double use of *οἶκος Θεοῦ* were conceivable, is it not wholly superfluous for the author, after having shown the superiority of Jesus to the angels, to go on to show that He is superior to Moses? ¹ Moreover, this idea of the superiority of Jesus to Moses is not used at all in what follows, for the connexion which Theophylact, Westcott, and Von Soden have tried to prove between ch. iii. 1-6, and ch. v. sqq. does not really exist. Von Soden has also tried, unsuccessfully, to show that ch. xiii. takes account of ch. iii. and iv. But before taking up the main portion of these chapters, let me speak of the verses which follow the homily.

That iv. 14 has no connexion at all with what precedes, has already been shown, and is generally admitted. ² But

¹ This holds also as a reply to Westcott (p. 72). This comparison is an essential part of the argument; for though the superiority of Christ to Moses might have seemed to be necessarily implied in the superiority of Christ to angels, yet the position of Moses in regard to the actual Jewish system made it necessary, in view of the difficulty of Hebrew Christians, to develop the truth independently—for the angels were mentioned only on account of their relation to the Law. The passage from *Jalkut* on Isaiah lii. 13, quoted by Delitzsch (p. 107 n. 1) is no parallel, for the argument follows the logical order: The servant of Jehovah, the King Messiah, is higher than Abraham, more exalted than Moses, more exalted than the ministering angels.

² Cf. especially Keil, *Commentar über den Brief an die Hebräer*, 1885, p. 12,

it is also noticeable that *v.* 16 repeats *v.* 14, and that the three verses 14–16 contain nothing that has not been said already in the Epistle. (Cf. *iv.* 14 with *vi.* 18, 20, *x.* 19 sqq.; *iv.* 15 with *ii.* 17 sq., *v.* 2, *vii.* 15, *ix.* 28; *iv.* 16 with *vi.* 11, *x.* 19, 22, 35).

Finally, and this is the most important point, all connexion is lacking between *iv.* 16 and *v.* 1. For that every high priest is taken from among men because he can contemplate sinners dispassionately (and that is the main thought of verse 1 f.) can never be the ground of exhortation to draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace. For we cannot pass over verse 16 and make the *γάρ* go back to verse 15, because in that case *v.* 1 ought to read: *πᾶς γὰρ ἀρχιερεὺς ἐξ ἀνθρώπων λαμβανόμενος μετριοπαθεῖν δύναται τοῖς ἀγνοοῦσιν κ.τ.λ.* (This is in opposition to Tholuck, p. 242; Kurtz, p. 172; Westcott, p. 117; and Weiss, p. 129.) Von Hofmann (p. 280 ff.) and Delitzsch (p. 170 ff.) make the *γάρ* govern grammatically only *vv.* 1–3, but “logically” (!) the whole section *vv.* 1–10, and treat verse 7f. as an answer corresponding to the requirement in verses 1–3. Riehm (*Der Lehrbegriff des Hebräerbriefts*, 1858 f., p. 447, *xx.*) thinks that in verses 1–3, at least as a secondary idea, the presence in Christ of this capacity for *μετριοπάθεια* is indicated. Even that, however, is not really in the passage; the verses are intended merely to show that Christ did not wilfully seize upon the high priesthood. (Verse 4: cf. Bleek, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, III., 1840, p. 28; Weiss, p. 135; Von Soden, p. 40; a different view in Kurtz, p. 175.) That being the case, the application to Christ of what is said in verses 1–3 about the Aaronic high priest is certainly wanting. In *iv.* 15 the application was only indicated, but it had been made in full in *ii.* 17 f. From

n. 1. Ch. *iv.* 14 16 cannot be brought in respect either of contents or form into harmonious connexion with the preceding exhortation to enter into God's rest.

this point of view we can understand the emphasis with which ἐξ ἀνθρώπων λαμβανόμενος is put first. This is a second time emphasized with reference to the earthly high priest, in the case of whom it really goes without saying, because just before, in ii. 14, 17, it had been demonstrated that it was necessary for the Son of God to become man and to be subject to suffering. It was necessary for Him to become like us in all respects in order that He might have compassion,—for in the same way every high priest is taken from among men, because then he can contemplate sinners dispassionately.

Thus iii. 1-6 and iv. 14-16 are shown by reasons drawn from the composition and the contents to be alien to the context; and this is especially true of the homily which lies between these two passages.

For this homily certainly implies other conditions than those to be inferred from the rest of the Epistle. Even if ἀποστῆναι ἀπὸ Θεοῦ ζῶντος, iii. 12, can be used of apostasy to Judaism, as, in view of ix. 14, xii. 22, seems at least not impossible,¹ yet in general this homily insists, in an almost Methodistic fashion, on conversion, while the rest of the Epistle exhorts to a conservative holding fast to the confession. But if not on the same occasion, yet at different times, the two thoughts might be emphasized by the same writer, for the style in general, and the not perfectly exact use of the LXX. and of Philo in particular, are the same in both pieces. Perhaps the attitude towards Judaism is

¹ Nevertheless it is comprehensible that, especially on the ground of this passage, Von Soden (p. 10), Pfeiderer (p. 625), Weizsäcker (p. 492) think that apostasy to heathenism is meant in the Epistle; while Zahn (p. 661) and Keil (p. 18) think at least of a Judaism without faith and hope, and Häring ("Zur Frage nach dem Zweck und Leserkreis des Hebräerbriefs," in *Studien und Kritiken*, 1891, p. 595) of a speculative Judaism. If the passage can really not be understood as an anti-Judaistic polemic, then, instead of constructing *ad hoc* with Pfeiderer (p. 626) an ascetical and mystical Syncretism, it would be necessary to hold with Weizsäcker (p. 474 f.), that different aims are present in the Epistle; or, since the rest shows no disharmony, to cut out chapters 3 and 4.

more friendly in chapters iii. and iv. than in the rest of the Epistle; but even the latter is not uniform in this respect, as the varying presentations of the thought of the Epistle show.¹

Finally, it cannot be proved that the two chapters were unknown to the later Christian writers who used the Epistle. They must therefore have been inserted later by the author himself.

That this often happened in ancient writings with short remarks is well known,² and it has been assumed for some passages of the Pauline epistles, especially by Witting, Gratz, Wilke, Renan, Laurent, Kuoke.³ There is a considerable passage, §§ 12 and 13, in the tract which bears Philo's name, "Quod omnis probus liber," which Ohle (*Jahrbücher für prot. Theologie*, 1887, p. 298 ff., 376 ff.), with

¹ Cf. on the one side Köstlin, p. 466: "The author controverts the holiness and value of the Law just as far as is possible without breaking the connexion of Old and New Testament revelation." Immer, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, 1877, p. 405: "Nevertheless the difference is radical." Davidson, *An Introduction to the Study of the New Testament*, 2I., 1882, p. 201 f.: "The view of Christianity and Judaism is determined by the Alexandrine conception of the supersensuous world. . . . The present world or æon was that which preceded Christianity; the future world or æon is that of Christianity itself. . . . The two are metaphysically opposed to one another." Brückner, p. 227: "Judaism is in every respect the incomplete type and copy; Christianity, on the other hand, at least in its proper nature and its ideal worth, the complete and veritable prototype"; p. 225: "The author's principle is to emphasize in every respect the complete contrast between the old and the new covenant." On the other side, Reuss, *Histoire de la Théologie Chrétienne au Siècle Apostolique*, 1852, II. p. 556: "L'Épître aux Hébreux ne connaît pas l'antithèse entre la foi et la loi. Elle paraît plutôt se borner à reconnaître entre les deux dispensations une différence de degré ou de progrès, et dans la seconde une nouvelle phase d'évolution par laquelle il ne resterait de la première que le cadre extérieur sans la réalité du contenu." Schmiedel, *Que intercedat ratio inter doctrinam epistolæ ad Hebræos missæ et Pauli apostoli doctrinam*, p. 13: "Non natura sua atque ingenio, sed gradu differunt." Pfeiderer, *Paulinismus*, 21890, p. 375: "The Epistle to the Hebrews represents Judaism as in the positive relation to Christianity of a preparatory institution, an earlier copy." And especially Weiss, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, 51888, p. 475 ff.

² Cf. Blass in Müller, *Handbuch der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, 2I., 1892, p. 262.

³ Cf. also the author's essay: *Die Einheitlichkeit der paulinischen Briefe*, 1894.

the approval of Kuenen (*Theol. Tijdschr.*, 1887, p. 568, 1889, p. 134), and Tidemann (*ibid.*, 1892, p. 597) has tried to cut out as not genuine, but he has perhaps shown merely that the sections are not part of the original draft. And in other periods of stylistic diffuseness writers have inserted in their works episodes which could be separated, and which in some cases they themselves published separately. I would only call to mind Wordsworth's "Female Vagrant" which was even published before the poem "Guilt and Sorrow," of which it now forms a part, or Immermann's "Oberhof," that single idyll which was worked into the romance *Münchhausen*, but is now usually printed by itself. In the same way the unknown author of the Epistle to the Hebrews seems to me to have worked as an after-thought one of his sermons, the earliest that we have, into his Epistle to the Church in Rome.

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