

ART. V.—THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

THE problem indicated by the title of this paper is one of more than average interest. Though admitting of various possible solutions, the data are so indeterminate that it can never, perhaps, be solved conclusively. The plausible conjecture hazarded by Luther, that the Epistle was written by Apollos, rests solely upon the notices of Apollos which are given in the Acts of the Apostles. He was an eloquent man, "mighty in the Scriptures," and familiar with the teaching of St. Paul. So also, undoubtedly, was the writer of the Epistle; but that does not prove that he was the same person. It is strange that, if Apollos was the writer, no shred of a tradition should exist to that effect. The grounds upon which Luther bases his conjecture are sufficient in themselves to have occasioned a tradition, and the fact that they did not actually do so suggests the inference that they did not warrant it. If the author of the Epistle was not known, it may have been known that Apollos was not the author. It seems hardly likely that it would be left for Luther to identify a man who could so easily be identified.

Let us try to consider the question on its merits, and to see precisely the bearing of the evidence. Though we fail to arrive at any definite conclusion, the investigation may not be without its value.

Canon Farrar¹ names ten facts as regards the writer, which he thinks should help us to identify him. He was (1) a Jew; (2) a Hellenist, "for he exclusively quotes the Septuagint version"; (3) subjected to Alexandrian training; (4) a man of great eloquence; (5) a friend of Timotheus; (6) known to his readers, and empowered to write to them authoritatively; (7) not an Apostle, "for he classes himself with those who had been taught by the Apostles"; (8) much influenced by St. Paul, "he largely, though independently, adopts his phraseology"; (9) he wrote before the destruction of Jerusalem; (10) "it is doubtful whether he had ever been at Jerusalem, for his references to the Temple and its ritual seem to apply . . . mainly to the Tabernacle as described in the Septuagint version of the Pentateuch." For the most part these facts are undeniable. But as to the seventh, it is only certain that the writer was not one of the Twelve Apostles; he may have been "sent forth," as St. Paul was, with a special apostolic commission.² As to

¹ "Early Days of Christianity," chap. xvii.

² Cf. Acts xiv. 14 with Acts xiii. 1-3.

the tenth, it is so worded as to express a certain amount of diffidence, and it is not necessarily justified by those passages in the Epistle which seem to be relied upon.

Having named these facts, Canon Farrar assumes further that we ought to find, in the New Testament, the name of the writer amongst St. Paul's companions. In this assumption the possible names are Aquila, Silas, Titus, Barnabas, Clement, Mark, Luke and Apollos; and "the only way to decide between them" is "by a process of elimination." The Canon eliminates all but Apollos, whom he conceives to have been the writer; but though his objections to most of the others are conclusive, he is hardly so careful as he might be in dealing with the claims of one of them—St. Barnabas. With regard to him, this is what he says—it is best to give his actual words:

Tertullian, in his usual oracular way, attributes the Epistle to Barnabas; but he seems to have done so by an unsupported conjecture. The Epistle is incomparably superior to the Epistle of Barnabas, with its exaggerated Paulinism; but that Epistle is not by the Barnabas of the New Testament, and is not earlier in date than A.D. 110. The "Apostle" Barnabas, as a Levite, would more probably have described the Temple at Jerusalem *as it then was*, and if he had possessed the natural ability to compose such a treatise as this, he would not have been so immediately thrown into the shade by St. Paul from the very beginning of his first missionary journey. His claims have received but little support, and he would have been indeed unfortunate if a false epistle was attributed to him, and his real epistle, which was so far superior, assigned to another.¹

Now, what does all this amount to? If St. Barnabas did write the Epistle, and was "unfortunate," his misfortune cannot invalidate his authorship. The sole reason, then, for discrediting Tertullian is that a Levite, acquainted with Jerusalem, would have described the Jewish ritual differently. And this is really Canon Farrar's point, though he has feathered it with considerations which have no cogency. "No Levite," he has said, "who had lived at Jerusalem could have written on the Temple, or rather Tabernacle, as Apollos (?) does."

Dr. Gottlieb Lünemann, in his Commentary on the Epistle, is far more respectful towards Tertullian. "He names Barnabas," he says, "as the author, and that not in the form of a conjecture, but simply, and without qualification, in such wise that he manifestly proceeds upon a supposition universally current

¹ Dr. Farrar, in a footnote, says: "Perhaps he had heard of an 'Epistle of Barnabas,' and confused this letter with it." He adds: "The claims of Barnabas are maintained by Camerarius, Twisten, Ullmann, Thiersch—who, however, thinks that the epilogue was by St. Paul—and Wieseler. . . . Renan also inclines in favour of Barnabas. In the Clementine Homilies Barnabas (and not St. Mark) appears as the founder of the Church of Alexandria."—"Early Days of Christianity," chap. xvii.

in the churches of his native land."¹ Yet Lünemann agrees with Canon Farrar, and on precisely the same grounds, that Barnabas cannot have been the author. "Absolutely decisive," he says, "against Barnabas, is the fact that, according to Acts iv. 36, 37, he was a Levite, and must have long time dwelt in Jerusalem, since he even possessed land there. He must, therefore, have been more accurately informed with regard to the inner arrangements of the temple in Jerusalem at that time than was the case with the author of our Epistle."

And yet when we come to examine this objection it seems to have no real weight. The writer of the Epistle, whoever he may have been, may have been perfectly acquainted with the arrangements of the temple; although, no doubt for reasons of his own, he has chosen to draw his illustrations from the tabernacle. His allusions are not indicative of ignorance; they rather suggest familiarity—they are quite in harmony with the supposition that the person who makes them may have been a Levite. Even Hebrews ix. 4—which seems to identify the altar of incense with the furniture of the Holy of Holies—may be justified by comparison with 1 Kings vi. 22, which speaks of the altar as "belonging to the oracle"; or it may be explained, as Dr. Milligan suggests,² by the actual appearance of the tabernacle when the high-priest entered it on the Day of Atonement. Such an illustration as that in iv. 12, which compares the energy of the word of God to the action of the sacrificial knife "piercing even to the dividing of both joints and marrow," almost suggests Levitical experiences, and there is nothing in the Epistle, from first to last, to show that the writer was unacquainted with Jerusalem. No conclusion can be more gratuitous than that which Dr. Lünemann speaks of as "decisive." It does not follow from the premisses, and may quite unhesitatingly be set aside. Whether the writer of the Epistle was a Levite or no—whether he had never seen Jerusalem, or whether he had lived there all his life—on these points the Epistle is silent, and cannot give us any certain information. The writer did not write about the temple because it served his purpose better to write instead about the tabernacle. "As if to transfer," says Canon Westcott,³ "his readers to a more spiritual atmosphere, though this is but one aspect of the motive which seems to have ruled his choice, he takes his illustrations from the tabernacle, and not from the temple. The transitory resting-place, which was fashioned according to the command of God, and not the permanent 'house,' which was

¹ "English Translation," p. 7. The quotation is given at length from "De Pudicitia," chap. xx. Cf. Westcott on "The Canon," p. 339, note.

² "Biblical Educator," iii. 230.

³ "Canon," p. 42.

reared according to the design of man, was chosen as the figure of higher and divine truths." It was a matter of choice, not of necessity. It could only be decisive against the authorship of St. Barnabas, had it been a matter of necessity, and not of choice.

It appears, then, that the reasons given by Canon Farrar for eliminating St. Barnabas from amongst the possible authors of the Epistle are not conclusive. For anything that appears to the contrary he may just as well have been the author as Apollos. Let us examine rather more at length the considerations which may be urged in favour of his claims.

For one thing we have the assertion of Tertullian [A.D. 160—240], already referred to. He speaks of St. Barnabas as one whose authority was second to that of the Apostles, but, in naming him as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, he seems to have no doubt whatever. "We have, too," he says, "a work of Barnabas addressed 'to the Hebrews' a sufficiently authoritative person, since he was one whom Paul associated with himself, 1 Cor. ix. 16." Later indications of a like opinion¹ may be no more than echoes of Tertullian, but the Stichometric catalogue inserted in the Codex Claromontanus, and also, apparently, of African origin, seems to refer to the Epistle to the Hebrews under the heading of "Barnabæ Epist."² The Epistle thus named is said to contain 850 lines. Now, in existing codices, for the Epistle to the Hebrews, the lines vary from 703 to 830; whilst the Epistle of Barnabas is a third longer, and would contain, on the lowest computation, over 930 lines. If the Epistle to the Hebrews be intended, then, the statement of Tertullian does not stand alone. It would seem that in North Africa, at any rate, the opinion referred to was at one time prevalent. And, *other things equal*, an opinion thus supported, dating from the close of the second century, and indicating a belief then current, ought surely to be reckoned of greater value than a conjecture, utterly unsupported by tradition, which was started more than a thousand years later. If St. Barnabas and Apollos are alike eligible as possible authors of this anonymous Epistle, we must needs conclude that it is more probable St. Barnabas, rather than Apollos, wrote it.

But if we admit the possibility that the author may, for aught we know, have been a Levite familiar with Jerusalem, then all the required conditions are fulfilled by St. Barnabas quite as well as by Apollos. He is even more likely than Apollos to have been familiar with the teaching, especially the earlier teaching, of St. Paul. He had, probably, as a Jew of Cyprus,

¹ Jerome, Epist., 129; "Philastrus Hær.," 89.

² Cf. Westcott, "Canon," p. 339, note, and Appendix D, note; also Lünemann, pp. 23, 24.

been subjected to Alexandrian training. He was so notable a prophet that not only is he named the first amongst the *Prophets* and teachers of the church at Antioch, but he had gained the name of "The Son of Prophecy"—the Son, *i.e.*, of prophetic exhortation—a fact in itself sufficient to assure us that he possessed a faculty for persuasive eloquence.

This last point has been too much overlooked. The name Bar-nabas has been treated as though it were a birth-name, whereas it was given, by those who knew the man, in acknowledgment of the owner's distinction as a prophet. His birth-name, as we know, was Joseph; but he proved that he possessed the gift of prophecy, and hence it was that he acquired his surname. And this fact has an important bearing on our argument; for if one thing is more certain than another as to the authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews, it is that the author was a *prophet*—as that term is used in the New Testament—one who, whether he were Apollos or another, was worthy to be called a Barnabas. By comparison of 1 Cor. xii. 8 with 1 Cor. xiv. 3, we may gather the nature of the prophetic gift, as it was understood by St. Paul and his contemporaries. The prophet was distinguished from the teacher as conversant with "the word of wisdom" rather than with "the word of knowledge." The aim of his speech was edification, building up the character and building up the Church. The means which he employed were *παράκλησις* and *παραμυθία*—instigation which might lift the weight of sloth, and encouragement which might lift the weight of despondency.¹ The one notice of St. Barnabas' teaching which we find in the Acts of the Apostles (xi. 23) is quite in accordance with this view of a prophet's functions. "When he came to Antioch and had seen the grace of God, he was glad; and he exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." It was good for men to believe in Christ, but belief might soon be chilled into indifference. It was the part of a prophet to urge them further to act on their belief with whole-hearted resolution—not to be content with having come to Christ, but to use their utmost energy to *cleave* to Him. Whoever may have been the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, he has in view the same object, and his exhortations are essentially *prophetic*—exhortations relying in turn upon instigation and encouragement. No work in the New Testament better illustrates St. Paul's account of prophecy; its aim throughout is to build men up by *παράκλησις* and *παραμυθία*.

But if St. Barnabas may have written the Epistle, and if the Epistle is one which might have been written by St. Barnabas,

¹ Cf. Meyer and Bengel, *in loc.*

we may go yet a step further, and inquire if there are any personal indications which may confirm or modify our views as to the authorship. On the surface there is nothing much to help us. The allusions in the last chapter would seem equally appropriate from St. Barnabas or from Apollos. But we must remember that the association of ideas depends, in all men, upon their past experience, and where we find ideas so associated as to harmonize with an experience with which we are familiar, it is natural to suppose that the owner of the experience may be also the author or transmitter of the ideas.¹ Now, there are in the Epistle to the Hebrews associated ideas and verbal collocations, which, however we may account for them, are just such as what we know of St. Barnabas would justify. We cannot press them too far. Some may think that they hardly deserve notice. Still, they are not without suggestiveness, if the claims of St. Barnabas are, on other grounds, admitted. In chap. x. 24 we find the words *κατανοῶμεν ἀλλήλους εἰς παροξυσμὸν ἀγάπης καὶ καλῶν ἔργων*. The only other place in the New Testament where the word *παροξυσμὸς* occurs is Acts xv. 39, where it is applied to the sharp contention which separated St. Barnabas from St. Paul. If the writer had that scene in mind, nothing can be more natural than that he should thus use the word which it suggested. "Let your contentions be such as will draw you closer, not such as will tend to separation." Again, in chap. xiii. 1—2, "Forget not to show love unto strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares," may there not be a reminiscence of the fact narrated in Acts ix. 27? Barnabas had entertained a stranger and found in him an unsuspected angel. The next verse, "Remember them that are in bonds," may be an added link in the same chain of association. St. Paul may even then have been a prisoner, and, in any case, the thought of him may have suggested others similarly circumstanced. Again, in chap. xii. 5, if the writer was *Υἱὸς Παρακλήσεως* there may be a pregnant meaning in the connection between *τῆς παρακλήσεως* and *ὡς υἱός*. And a somewhat similar remark will apply to chap. xiii. 22, where, almost in place of a signature, he says, *Παρακαλῶ δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, ἀνέχεσθε τοῦ λόγου τῆς παρακλήσεως*. Further illustrations might, perhaps, be found, but these may suffice for our present purpose. They *prove* nothing, one way or the other; but if Tertullian had good grounds for believing that St. Barnabas was the author of the letter, then they help us to an insight into the writer's mind, and may better enable us to understand him.

In addition to what has been already urged, there are two more points which deserve consideration. Whoever the writer

¹ Cf., e.g., 1 Peter v. 5-8 with John xiii. 4, etc., and 38.

may have been, his relations with St. Paul must have been close and intimate. Whether he had been influenced by St. Paul, or had himself had to do with influencing his friend, may, perhaps, be regarded as an open question. It seems as likely as not that the influence was mutual. With all the similarity of thought between the Epistle to the Hebrews and St. Paul's Epistles, there is no relation of dependence as between the work of a copyist and the works he copied from. The Epistle to the Hebrews is, in its way, quite as original a production as the Epistle to the Romans. The marks of distinct authorship are evident, though it is equally evident that both the authors were familiar with the working of each other's minds. Now, though St. Paul was acquainted with Apollos, there is no evidence of any continued intimacy; whereas St. Paul and Barnabas were like brothers just when each must have been the most impressionable. We should expect to find common characteristics in their writings, resulting from their long-continued friendship. The fact is, we overlook the real importance of the connection between the two men, because, in the narrative, it is not emphasized, and the time during which they were together seems to dwindle by reason of the historical perspective. But when attention is directed to the point, and we try to realize all that it implies, the probability seems greatly strengthened that an anonymous "*Pauline*" Epistle should be by Barnabas.

Lastly, if St. Barnabas wrote this Epistle, how comes it that his claims should have been ignored, whilst another Epistle, far inferior, has been attributed to him? Let us assume that the Epistle which bears his name, though of early date, is not of his production. Since it was known that he had written an Epistle of some kind, if an Epistle purporting to be by him were in circulation, is it not almost certain that attention would be diverted from his connection with another Epistle which was anonymous? Had there been no *so-called* Epistle of Barnabas, might not the belief of the Latin Christians in Africa, as represented by Tertullian, have been generally accepted? Must it not have been a bar to its acceptance that the pseudonymous Epistle held the ground?

One other suggestion may perhaps be hazarded. As Dr. Westcott has pointed out¹: "There is at least so much similarity between the 'Epistle of Barnabas' and the Epistle to the Hebrews as to render a contrast possible. . . . Both Epistles are constructed, so to speak, out of Old Testament materials; and yet the mode of selection and arrangement is widely different. Both exhibit the characteristic principles of the Alexandrine school; but in the one case they are modified, as it were, by an

¹ "Canon," p. 43, 44.

instinctive sense of their due relation to the whole system of Christianity; in the other they are subjected to no restraint, and usurp an independent and absolute authority." Now, is not this the kind of relation which might be expected to exist between the two Epistles, supposing that the writer of the later had been a somewhat unintelligent disciple of the teacher who had written the earlier? He gives us platitudes where the other gives us principles, but the platitudes are, in some sort, the shadows of the principles. It is just as when Ruskin gives us Ruskin, whilst the Ruskinite aggravates us with Ruskinese. If this suggestion be anywhere near the truth, then it makes in favour of St. Barnabas as the writer to the Hebrews; for the master of the man who wrote the pseudonymous Epistle would most likely be the person chosen to father it.

Such then, briefly stated, are the reasons—more or less weighty—for hesitating to accept the popular opinion that the Epistle to the Hebrews was written by Apollos. It is a matter of but little practical importance to discover who may or may not have been the author; but if, as the editor of the old Geneva Bible puts it, "it is not like" to have been St. Paul, and if Apollos and Barnabas¹ be the rival claimants, one is inclined to decide in favour of the latter.

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ART. VI.—TWENTY YEARS OF CHURCH DEFENCE.

TWENTY years have elapsed since the Church Defence movement in England commenced in serious earnest and took definite shape. Disestablishment in Ireland sent a thrill of alarm through the English Church, and caused many who had hitherto been apathetic in face of Liberationist agitation—because they had underrated its power—to take in hand the work of organization against Disestablishment in England. It is true that the Liberationists had been politic enough to profess that Disestablishment in Ireland was by no means of necessity the forerunner of the same process in England. The circumstances are different, said they, and "the case being altered, that alters the case." "No doubt," they explained, "we are in favour of Disestablishment in England as a philosophical theory;

¹ Dr. Farrar incidentally calls attention to a remark of Bishop Wordsworth's that, had the Epistle been written by St. Barnabas, Epiphanius, a Cypriot bishop, would probably have been acquainted with the fact, whereas he attributes the authorship to St. Paul. But, although St. Barnabas was a Levite of Cyprus, it does not follow that his writings were better known in Cyprus than elsewhere. Why should he, of all the prophets, be most honoured in his own country? And further, Epiphanius (circ. A.D. 401) lived almost two centuries later than Tertullian; and it is clear that by that time the prevalent views had no sure evidence to support them.