Hebrews

Robert C. Newman
Authorship of Hebrews
Variety of Views on Author

- Paul
  - Paul & Luke
  - Paul & Clement of Rome
- Luke
- Barnabas
- Apollos
- Other Less Likely Suggestions
Internal Evidence on Author

Explicit indications
- Associate of Timothy
- Not one of the original 12 apostles
- Appears to be one author, male

Content
- Similarities to Paul
- Differences from Paul
Internal Evidence on Author

Style

- More Hellenistic than (other) Pauline letters
- Differences in phrasing
External Evidence on Author

- Hebrews is attested as early as any NT work.
- The Alexandrian fathers all refer to it.
- Tertullian (c200) assigns it to Barnabas.

Generally:
- The W churches denied Pauline authorship.
- The E churches favored it, w/ qualification.
Summary on Author

- Not Timothy!
- Most likely named candidate is Paul.
  - But have to make special assumptions re/ its style
- "Not Paul" more likely, but no single candidate would gain more votes.
- God allowed knowledge of its author to be lost.
Recipients of Hebrews
The People

- Surely Jewish.
- Professing Christians.
- We can say a good bit about their circumstances.
  - See under Background, later.
Their Location

Usual suggestions:
- Rome
- Jerusalem
- Alexandria
- Antioch

Critical passage (13:24) ambiguous
- "Those from Italy greet you"
Their Location

- Rome
- Alexandria
- Antioch
- Jerusalem
Their Location

Following Lenski, I favor Rome as the letter’s destination.

Probably written to a Jewish house church in Rome facing Nero's persecution.

In any case, the remark to greet all the other leaders (13:24) favors a subgroup within a larger whole, such as a house church in a city with many such.
Date of Hebrews
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- Latest possible – 95 AD
  - Must precede 1 Clement

- Earliest possible – well after 30 AD
  - "heard" (2:3) implies church has secondary sources of information
  - "considering the outcome of their lives" (13:7) sounds like original leaders have died, though possibly martyred
Date of Hebrews

More refinement attempted

- The temple is still functioning, so before 70 AD
- If the Timothy is Paul's companion, not till after 50 AD
- Apparently not safe (where recipients are) to be a Christian, but still safe to be a Jew
- If Rome, probably between 64 and 66 AD
- Other locations might have wider window
Background of Recipients
Their Conversion

- Apparently converted by immediate disciples of Christ (2:3), who had confirmed truth of their message by miracles (2:4)

- The writer is confident that they (most of them) are saved (6:9), in spite of his warning for their need to hold on (3:14)
Their Christian Life & Ministry

- Had seen some persecution earlier
- Had been Christians long enough for their first leaders to die
- But recently they had stagnated
Their Problem

- Knew the basics of Christianity, but were backsliding
- Were in severe danger of apostasy
  - Not into paganism or some other heresy
  - But into returning to Judaism
- Writer argues that Xy supercedes OT
  - Jesus is the final mediator
  - He typologically fulfills the OT sacrifices
Outline of Hebrews
Outline of Hebrews

Prologue: God's revelation climaxes in his Son (1:1-4)

Superior to the OT mediators (1:5-7:28)
- Angels (1:5-2:18)
- Moses (& Joshua) (3:1-4:13)
- Aaronic Priests (5:1-7:28)
Outline of Hebrews

- Superior to the OT provisions (8:1-10:39)
  - Better covenant (8:1-13)
  - Better sanctuary (9:1-12)
  - Better sacrifice (9:13-10:18)

- Exhortation & Final Plea for Faith (10:19-12:29)

- Concluding Exhortations (13:1-25)
The Argument of Hebrews

See text in Course Notes
The End

Hebrews deserves a lifetime of repeated study