

1. The Epistle to the Hebrews

a. An overview:

An understanding to this letter is helped by a general knowledge of the spiritual state of Israel in general in the times of the preparation of this work. Her faith (Israel's) was a matter of revelation particularly in matters pertaining to priesthood, sacrifice, etc. It found its basis in the work and word from Sinai where the pattern of truth was given to Moses. In theory the nation was gathered about this faith and the real key of fidelity was not loyalty to a system but loyalty to Jehovah. Consequently the inner corps (Luke 2) was ready for a Messiah but the peripheral group, as is often the case, had lost its real point of identity and caused grief.

The problem that was produced with the coming of Jesus is not hard to see in a general sense. It embodied the difficulty of a religion-socio change. Jewish believers were subjected to a rigorous understanding of their position and the force of this provided a temptation to allow pressures of various sorts to force regression of spiritual ideal. There existed as well a temptation to syncretize the older ideals of faith and the newer messianic expression. Due to the "revealed" nature of the older order, one can quickly see the sort of problems produced.

The obvious solution, as propounded in the book of Hebrews, was to see in Christ, not a new revelation, but a perfect consummation of a previous existing order. As a Divine Person, the loyalty owed Jehovah must not express itself in terms of loyalty paid to Christ for He is the Sent one of God..Jehovah, the Son, so to speak. This letter will argue for this one the basis of His obvious superiority to existing ideals, His character of fulfillment of God's will, His perception by faith in all ages, and His sine-qua-non character for the reception of the grace and purposes of God.

It is helpful to remember that the Jewish community of the Lord's time had a messianic consciousness and the Jewish esoterics (Qumran, for example) had a "last-day" complex. Both of these concepts, however, were governed by political opportunism. Thus the real Messiah, whenever coming, had a great liability with which to contend in the realm of faith and practice.

Hebrews has an anonymous authorship and there are several views in the literature of the church. Basically they may be classified as 1) Paul; 2) Other than Paul, or 3) Pauline...meaning that the work is likely a collaboration work of Paul and another of the apostolic (or early church company). In favor of the authorship of Paul are these arguments: The external witness of