

The letter to the Hebrews

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The letter to the Hebrews

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Usually Hebrews was attached in Greek manuscripts to the collection of letters by Paul. Although no author is mentioned (for there is no address), a reference to Timothy (Heb 13:23) suggested connections to the circle of Paul and his assistants. Yet the exact audience, the author, and even whether Hebrews is a letter have long been disputed. The author saw the addressees in danger of apostasy from their Christian faith. This danger was due not to any persecution from outsiders but to a weariness with the demands of Christian life and a growing indifference to their calling (Heb 2:1; 4:14; 6:1– The 19th book of the New Testament is usually called "The Epistle (or Letter) to the Hebrews." However, its form or genre is not really like an ancient letter (except for the ending), but more like a treatise and a homily (a sermon based on scripture). Moreover, this writing does not explicitly address any "Hebrews" (a title not attached until the second century), and its author was almost certainly not St. Paul (as had been assumed for much of Christian history). Nonetheless, the composition commonly known as "To the Hebrews" was one of the most influential early The letter's canonicity is not in doubt; it was included in the canon by the Council of Trent (8 April 1546) among the other writings of Paul, although the Council chose not to state categorically that it was written by Paul. The Pontifical Biblical Commission, in a decree issued on April 24, 1914, reaffirmed its canonicity. It answered the question, "Has the apostle Paul to be regarded as the author of this letter in the sense that not only must one hold that he conceived it and expressed it under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but that he gave it the form in which it has come down to us?... We have no definite information about where and when Hebrews was written, or to whom it was addressed. Probably the author wrote it in Italy (cf. The Letter emphasizes the everlasting priesthood of Christ as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (7:1-8:12), and that he sacrificed himself once for our sins (Hebrews 7:27, 9:26-28, 10:12-14). The superior quality of the New Covenant over the Old is emphasized in the Letter to the Hebrews. Hebrews 8:1 reads "Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of Majesty in heaven." In Hebrews 8:2, Christ is called a minister - λειτουργός or leitourgos. In 8:6, his ministry - λειτουργίας or leitourgias -

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