

Did the apostle Paul write the epistle to the Hebrews?

This question has been the source of much debate among sincere Evangelical Christians. Surprisingly, many believe that Paul did write this letter, without offering any tangible proof to support their perspective. However, I have become convinced by a passage within the epistle itself, which proves that Paul was not the author of this Biblical document, as revealed in Hebrews 2:3-4, where we read –

“. . . how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.”

The significance of the above assertion, as it pertains to this letter’s authorship, is to be found in the use of four plural pronouns: we, us, those and them. In using the plural pronouns “we” and “us,” the writer identifies himself with the Hebrew Christians to whom he wrote. His Jewish background is on display throughout by means of his thorough knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures. On the other hand, the author’s use of the third person plural pronouns “those” and “them,” just as strongly disassociates him from the group of men who heard the gospel spoken by the Lord Himself and followed up with proclamations of their own. These were the apostles! Their ministries were accompanied by signs, wonders and various miracles, in order to confirm the message of the gospel as having its source in God.

This begs the question: Would the apostle Paul have regarded himself as part of “those who heard”? Or would he have belonged to the company of believers (we/us), with whom the apostolic proclamation was initially shared? That question is answered by Paul himself in Galatians 1:11-12, where we read the following –

“For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.”

This direct revelation of the gospel message from Christ to Paul apparently took place in Arabia, without any input from the other apostles (Galatians 1:15-17). His testimony in Galatians is more than sufficient in proving that Paul would have considered himself as someone who was directly and personally taught by the Savior. He was not a part of the original apostolic fraternity, as he indicates in 1 Corinthians 15:8, but always viewed himself as possessing full apostolic authority, revealed by the defense of his ministry in 2 Corinthians 12:11-12.

This contrast found in Hebrews 2:3-4 (we/us) versus (those/them), and supported by Galatians 1:11-12; 15-17; makes it clear that the author of the epistle to the Hebrews was not an apostle, and could not have been the apostle Paul.