

Who wrote the Letter to the Hebrews?

In the last class, the School of Faith instructor identified a passage as coming "from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Hebrews." To the best of my knowledge, St. Paul was not the author of Hebrews. Or was he?

Many Church Fathers, both East and West, in the early centuries of expressed the view that St. Paul authored the Letter to the Hebrews--either himself or through a disciple or perhaps secretary.

Even so, the issue of the authorship of the Letter to the Hebrews has always been a matter of debate. Its style is unlike the other New Testament books, including St. Paul's other letters, and the letter itself does not designate its author. For these and other reasons, most scholars today are of the opinion that St. Paul did not write Hebrews, at least not in the strictest sense.

On questions such as these, we strongly recommend the [Ignatius Catholic Study Bible](#), by Ignatius Press. The volume of that study Bible devoted to the Letter to the Hebrews offers the following summary on p. 13:

"It would seem that a balanced assessment of authorship must neither deny the uniqueness of Hebrews nor overemphasize the distinctiveness of the work at the expense of its notable affinities with St. Paul's recognized writings. Several similarities in thought, expression, and theology make it all but certain that some connection exists between Hebrews and the Pauline tradition. Some read the reference to Timothy in 13:23 as confirmation that its author stands within the circle of Paul and his missionary associates (Acts 16:1-3; Phil. 2:19-24).

"For the vast majority of modern scholars, the combination of traces of Pauline thought and elements of non-Pauline style is best explained by the hypothesis that identifies the author with a Pauline disciple. Thus, the tradition of Pauline authorship remains reasonable, if we take it to mean that Hebrews' doctrinal *content* is Paul's, even if its literary *composition* is the work of an unnamed collaborator who expressed Paul's teaching in a particularly elegant way.

"In this way, the 'Pauline origin' of Hebrews can be maintained without defining the exact nature of Paul's relationship to the work."