introbuction.] THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS. [cn. xv.   
   
 tradition docs not bear them out. In proconsular Africa it was ascribed   
 to Barnabas: by the tradition which had come down to Origen and his   
 fellows, to Luke or Clement ; while the Western Church, even when   
 judged of by Ireneus, who was brought up in Asia, and even ineluding   
 the Church of Rome, the capital of the world, where all reports on such.   
 matters were sure to be ventilated, seems to have been altogether   
 without any positive tradition or opinion on the matter.   
 85, Before advancing with the history, which has now become of   
 secondary importance to us, I will state to what, in my own view, this   
 result points, as regarding the formation of our own conclusion on the   
 matter.   
 86. It simply leayes us, unfettered by any overpowering judgment of   
 antiquity, to examine the Epistle for ourselves, and form our own opinion   
 from its contents. Even were we to admit the opinion of a Pauline   
 authorship to the rank of an early tradition, which it does not appear in   
 the strict sense to have been, we should then have ancient ecclesiastical   
 tradition broken into various lines, and inconsistent with itself: not   
 requiring our assent to one or other of its numerous variations... Those   
 who are prepared to follow it, and it alone, will have to make up their   
 minds whether they will attach themselves to the eatechetieal school of   
 Alexandria, and if so, whether to that portion of it (if such portion   
 existed, which is not proved) which regarded the Epistle as purely and   
 simply the work of St. Paul, or to that which, with Clement, regarded   
 the present Epistle as a Greck version by St. Luke of a Hebrew original   
 by St. Paul,—or to the West African Church, which regarded it as   
 written by Barnabas ; or to the “story” or “account” mentioned by   
 Origen, in its Clementine or its Luean branch ; or to the negative view   
 of the churches of Europe.   
 87. For to one or other of these courses, and on these grounds, would   
 the intelligent follower of tradition be confined. It would be in vain for   
 him to allege, as a motive for his opinion, the subsequent universal preva-   
 lence of one or other of these views, unless he could at the same time shew   
 that that prevalence was owing to the overpowering force of an authentic   
 tradition, somewhere or other existing. That the whole church of Rome   
 believed the Pauline authorship in subsequent centuries, would be no   
 compensation for the total absence of such belief at that time when, if   
 there were any such authentic tradition any where, it must have pre-   
 vailed in that church. That the same was uniformly asserted and acted   
 on by the writers of the Alexandrine church in later ages, does not tend   
 to throw any light on the vague uncertainty which hangs over the first   
 appearances of the opinion, wherever it is spoken of and its grounds   
 alleged by such earlier teachers as Clement and Origen.   
 88, And these considerations are much strengthened, when we take   
 into acconnt what strong reasons there were why the opinion of the   
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