improper to compare it with an epiſtle of Pliny, that ſeems to have been written upon a ſimilar occaſion, *[lib. ix. let.* 21.); which, though penned by one that was reckoned to excel in the epiſtolary ſtyle, and though it has undoubtedly many beauties, yet muſt be acknow­ledged, by every impartial reader, vallly inferior to this animated compoſition of the apoſtle.

The Epiſtle to the Hebrews has been generally aſcribed to Paul; but the truth of this opinion has been ſuſpected by others, for three reaſons: 1. The name of the writer is nowhere mentioned, neither in the begin­ning nor in any other part of the Epiſtle. 2. The ſtyle is ſaid to be more elegant than Paul’s. 3. There are expreſſions in the Epiſtle which have been thought unſuitable to an apoſtle’s character. 1. In anſwer to the firſt objection, Clemens Alexandrinus has aſſigned a very good reaſon: “Writing to the Hebrews (ſays he), who had conceived a prejudice againſt him, and were ſuſpicious of him, he wiſely declined ſetting his name at the beginning, left he ſhould offend them.” 2. Ori­gen and Jerome admired the elegance of the ſtyle, and reckoned it ſuperior to that which Paul has exhibited in his Epiſtles: but as ancient teſtimony had aſſigned it to Paul, they endeavoured to anſwer the objection, by ſuppoſing that the ſentiments were the apoſtle’s, but the language and compoſition the work of ſome other perſon. If the Epiſtle, however, be a tranſlation, which we believe it to be, the elegance of the language may belong to the tranſlator. As to the compoſition and arrangement, it cannot be denied that there are many ſpecimens in the writings of this apoſtle not in­ferior in theſe qualities to the Epiſtle to the Hebrews. 3. It is objected, that in Heb. ii. 3. the writer of this Epiſtle joins himſelf with thoſe who had received the goſpel from Chriſt’s apoſtles. Now Paul had it from Chriſt himſelf. But Paul often appeals to the teſtimo­ny of the apoſtles in ſupport of thoſe truths which he had received from Revelation: We may inſtance 1 Cor. XV. 5, 6, 7, 8.; 2 Tim. ii. 2.

This Epiſtle is not quoted till the end of the ſecond century, and even then does not ſeem to have been univerſally received. This ſilence might be owing to the Hebrews themſelves, who ſuppoſing this letter had no relation to the Gentiles, might be at no pains to diffuſe copies of it. The authors, however, on whoſe teſtimo­ny we receive it as authentic, are entitled to credit; for they lived ſo near the age of the apoſtles, that they were in no danger of being impoſed on; and from the numerous liſt of books which they rejected as ſpurious, we are aſſured that they were very careful to guard againſt impoſition. It is often quoted as Paul’s by Cle­mens Alexandrinus, about the year 194. It is recei­ved and quoted as Paul’s by Origen, about 230; by Dionyſius biſhop of Alexandria in 247; and by a nu­merous liſt of ſucceeding writers.

The Epiſtle to the Hebrews was originally written in Hebrew, or rather Syro-Chaldaic; a fact which we believe on the teſtimony of Clemens Alexandrinus, Je­rome, and Euſebius To this it has been objected, that as theſe writers have not referred to any authority, we ought to conſider what they ſay on this ſubject mere­ly as an opinion. But as they ſtate no reaſons for adopting this opinion, but only mention as a fact that Paul wrote to the Hebrews in their native language, we muſt allow that it is their teſtimony which they

**produce, and not** **their opinion. Euſebius informs us**, **that ſome ſuppoſed Luke the Evangeliſt, and others Clemens Romanus, to have been the tranſlator.**

According to the opiniom of ancient writers, parti­cularly Clemens Alexandrinus, Jerome, and Euthalius, this Epiſtle was addreſſed to the Jews in Paleſtine.— The ſcope of the Epiſtle confirms this opinion.

Having now given ſufficient evidence that this Epiſtle was written by Paul, the time when it was writ­ten may be eaſily determined: For the ſalutation from the ſaints of Italy (chap. iv. 24.), together with the apoſtle’s promiſe to ſee the Hebrews (ver. 2 3.), plain­ly intimate, that his confinement was then either ended or on the eve of being ended. It muſt therefore have been written ſoon after the Epiſtles to the Coloſſians, Epheſians, and Philemon, and not long before Paul left Italy, that is, in the year 61 or 62.

As the zealous defenders of the Moſaic law would naturally inſiſt on the divine authority of Moſes, on the majeſty and glory attending its promulgation by the miniſtry of angels, and the great privileges it afforded thoſe who adhered to it; the apoſtle ſhows,

I. That in all theſe ſeveral articles Chriſtianity had an infinite ſuperiority to the law.

This topic he purſues from chap. i. to xi. wherein he reminds the believing Hebrews of the extraordinary favour ſhown them by God, in ſending them a revela­tion by his own ſon, whoſe glory was far ſuperior to that of angels (chap. i. throughout); very naturally inferring from hence the danger of deſpiſing Chriſt on account of his humiliation, which, in perfect conſiſtence with his dominion over the world to come, was voluntarily ſubmitted to by him for wife and important reaſons; particularly to deliver us from the fear of death, and to encourage the freedom of our acceſs to God (chap. ii. throughout). With the ſame view he magnifies Chriſt as ſuperior to Moſes, their great legiſlator; and from the puniſhment inflicted on thoſe who rebelled againſt the authority of Moſes, infers the dan­ger of contemning the promiſes of the goſpel (chap.

iii. 2 — 13). And as it was an eaſy tranſition to call to mind on this occaſion that reſt in Canaan to which the authority inveſtcd in Moſes was intended to lead them; the apoſtle hence cautions them againſt unbelief, as what would prevent their entering into a ſuperior ſtate of reft to what the Jews ever enjoyed (chap. iii. 14. iv. 11). This caution is ſtill farther enforced by aw­ful views of God’s omniſcience, and a lively repreſentation of the high-prieſthood of Chriſt (chap. iv. to the end; and Chap. v. throughout). In the next place, he intimates the very hopeleſs ſituation of thoſe who apoſtatiſe from Chriſtianity (chap. vi. 1 — 9.); and then, for the comfort and confirmation of ſincere believers, diſplays to them the goodneſs of God, and his faithful adherence to his holy engagements; the performance of which is ſealed by the entrance of Chriſt into heaven as our forerunner (chap. vi. 9. to the end). Still far­ther to illuſtrate the character of our Lord, he enters into a parallel between him and Melchizedec as to their title and deſcent; and, from inſtances wherein the prieſthood of Melchizedec excelled the Levitical, infers, that the glory of the prieſthood of Chriſt ſurpaſſed that under the law (chap. vii. 1—17). From theſe premiſes the apoſtle argues, that the Aaronical prieſthood was not only excelled, but conſummated by that of Chriſt,