

Does the Bible Contain Forgeries?¹

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Introduction

Books in antiquity unquestionably contained forgeries, writings that were purportedly authored by someone who did not actually write them.² Critical scholars today argue that not only are many ancient works forged, but so also were some books found in both the Old and the New Testaments.³ Terms like “pseudepigrapha,” “pseudepigraphy,” or “pseudonymity” are often used to refer to such writings. Technically, a forged or pseudonymous text is not authored by the person whose name it bears and there must be the intention to deceive, from whatever motive.⁴ Such deceptive works are written after the purported author’s

¹ Terry L. Wilder, “Does the Bible Contain Forgeries?” in *In Defense of the Bible: A Comprehensive Apologetic for the Authority of Scripture*, ed. Steven B. Cowan and Terry L. Wilder (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2013), 165-81, reprinted with kind permission of author and publisher.

² E.g., see W. Speyer, *Die literarische Fälschung im heidnischen und christlichen Altertum: Ein Versuch ihrer Deutung*, Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft 1/2 (München: Beck, 1971) for a thorough look at all kinds of forgeries. See also Bruce M. Metzger, “Literary Forgeries and Canonical Pseudepigrapha,” *JBL* 91 (1972): 3-24.

³ For example, most recently, Bart D. Ehrman, *Forged: Writing in the Name of God: Why the Bible’s Authors Are Not Who We Think They Are* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2011).

⁴ Motives cloud the issue. The intention to deceive is what is important. See the definition by J. D. Denniston, “Forgeries, Literary Greek I. Greek,” *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. N. G. L. Hammond; 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), 444. Recent treatments of whether pseudonymity, for example, if present in the NT, was meant to deceive have determined, “Yes.” See A. D. Baum, *Pseudepigraphie und literarische Fälschung im frühen Christentum. Mit*

death by another person or during his life by someone who is not commissioned to do so. Plenty of these writings existed in ancient times, having been created by Greek, Roman, Jewish, and even Christian writers.⁵

Forgeries or deceptive pseudonymous writings are not the same as anonymous texts. The former works make definite bogus claims to authorship; the latter do not. Several anonymous works exist within both the Old and New Testaments. For example, the book of Judges, the Gospels, Acts, and Hebrews do not make definite claims to authorship. That is to say, the authors of these works did not specifically identify themselves, though they were surely known to their recipients. Strictly speaking, those biblical works most often classified by scholars as forged or pseudonymous are the OT books of Daniel and Isaiah,⁶ and certain Pauline and Petrine letters and those of James and Jude⁷ in the NT—namely, Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, the Pastoral Epistles, 1 and 2 Peter, James and Jude. One might also note that several forged, pseudo-apostolic works exist outside of the NT canon—for example, *3 Corinthians*, the *Epistle to the Laodiceans*, and the *Gospel of Peter*.

ausgewählten Quellentexten samt deutscher Übersetzung (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2001); J. Duff, “A Reconsideration of Pseudepigraphy in Early Christianity” (unpublished D.Phil. thesis; Oxford University, 1998); and T. L. Wilder, *Pseudonymity, the New Testament, and Deception* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2004).

⁵ Speyer, *Fälschung*; Wilder, *Pseudonymity*, 35-74.

⁶ For a defense of the unity/single authorship of the book of Isaiah see, e.g., the introductions in Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 1-39*, NAC 15a (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2007), and idem, *Isaiah 40-66*, NAC 15b (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2009).

⁷ E. E. Ellis (“Pseudonymity and Canonicity of New Testament Documents,” *Worship, Theology and Ministry in the Early Church. Essays in Honor of Ralph P. Martin*, ed. M. Wilkins [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993], 212-224; 220) notes that *only* the Pauline and Petrine epistles can be classified as pseudepigrapha. He says that the letters of James and Jude cannot be classified as such because the names of the authors (“Jude...brother of James” [Jude 1] and “James...servant of the Lord Jesus Christ” [James 1:1]) “are less precise and could refer to a number of individuals.” However, nearly all critics think that the names James and Jude refer to famous individuals of this name and many scholars think that they are used pseudonymously.

Pseudonymity in Greco-Roman and Jewish Writings

To promote the idea that pseudonymity as forgery exists within the canon, critics often appeal to Greco-Roman and Jewish sources. Sometimes scholars justify the presence of pseudonymous writings in Scripture by pointing to the practice in the Greco-Roman schools (e.g., the Pythagorean and Cynic schools). But while some pseudonymity may have been customary in such settings (cf. Iamblichus, *de Vita Pythagorica* § 198, 158), not all school productions, and likely most, were created acceptably in this context (cf. Diogenes Laertius 10.3). Authors of no reputation would often write using the pseudonym of an older, reputable figure in order to secure a hearing for their own works, thus the forgeries.

Specific attributions of authorship were not typically found within ancient Jewish writings. This conclusion is reached because ancient Israelite literature was customarily anonymous.⁸ Nonetheless, deceptive pseudonymity or forgery can be found amongst the Jews. The phenomenon occurred mostly in apocalyptic writings after 200 B.C. and arguably was due to a general belief that prophetic inspiration had ceased (cf. Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.41; *Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin* 11a). Evidently, like many Greco-Roman writers of little or no repute, some Jewish authors also wanted their forged writings to carry clout.

Jewish literature is generally not very helpful to a study of pseudepigraphy/forgery in early Christianity. As far as the NT is concerned, the writings most often classified by critical scholars as forgeries are letters. Thus, one really should look to Jewish epistolary literature to establish a precedent for the NT. Only two pseudonymous letters have come down to us from Jewish sources: the *Letter of Aristeas* and the *Epistle of Jeremiah*. The former work, strictly speaking, is not a letter because it does not occur in epistolary form. It is an apologetic narrative providing an account of the translation of the Hebrew OT into Greek. The latter writing, a sermon warning the Jews against pagan idolatry, calls itself a letter and identifies its senders and addressees, but purports to be a copy of an epistle. Thus, neither is entirely comparable to NT epistles. Other pseudonymous Jewish letters exist (e.g. *1 Baruch*, *2 Baruch* 78-87, *1 Enoch* 92-105, and some letters contained in *1* and *2*

⁸ See Morton Smith, "Pseudepigraphy in the Israelite Literary Tradition," in *Pseudepigrapha I*, ed. K. von Fritz (Genève: O. Revedin, 1972), 191-227.

Maccabees), but such writings occur within composite, apocalyptic or narrative frameworks. These letters had a different form and function than NT epistles and are not relevant to the latter.

Nonetheless, some pseudonymous letters can be found within Christian circles. However, these epistles are few in number and unremarkable (e.g. the *Letters of Christ and Abgarus*, the *Letter of Lentulus*, the *Correspondence of Paul and Seneca*, the *Epistle of Titus*, the *Epistle to the Laodiceans*, the *Epistle of the Apostles*, *3 Corinthians*, and the pseudo-Ignatian letters). They also do not closely resemble any NT epistles and were written at a much later date. Accordingly, though forged letters unquestionably can be found, scholars should not be so quick to consider the presence of forgeries in the NT because no contemporary pseudonymous writings exist which are just like the disputed NT letters. We will specifically look later at an OT book that many consider forged and also an appropriate precedent for the presence of forgeries in the NT.

People in Antiquity, Including Early Christians, Knew How to Detect Forgery

Sometimes the presence of forgeries in the Bible is defended with the appeal that the ancients were either naïve and thus fooled into receiving forgeries into the canon, or not equipped to detect such works like we are today. Nothing could be further from the truth. People in antiquity, including early Christians, knew well how to determine whether a work was genuine or forged.

Since the time of Herodotus, historians, grammarians, and philosophers in antiquity exercised an intensive criticism of documents attributed to recognized figures, not only to determine their authenticity, but also to stop the pseudonymity of various documents from misleading others.⁹ For instance, Herodotus questioned, on the grounds of content, whether Homer authored the Cyprian poems (*History* 2.116-17), and he also doubted that Homer wrote the Epigonean

⁹ Speyer, *Fälschung*, 114. E. Schnabel, "Der biblische Kanon und das Phänomen der Pseudonymität," *Jahrbuch für Evangelikale Theologie*. 3 Jahrgang (1989): 66.

epic (*History* 4.32);¹⁰ Ion of Chios mentions in his *Triagmi* that Pythagoras may have ascribed some of his own poems as verses of Orpheus (Diogenes Laertius 8.8; cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 1.131);¹¹ Aristotle doubted that Orpheus authored the Orphic poems (*De Anima* 1.5);¹² Cicero generally suspected that the Sibylline utterances were neither inspired nor authentic (*De Divinatione* 2.85, 2.110-12, 2.116);¹³ Herennius Philo doubted that *About the Jews* was actually written by Hecataeus (Origen, *Against Celsus* 1.15);¹⁴ and Sextus Julius Africanus questioned in his letter to Origen the authenticity of the Susanna history (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.31.1).¹⁵

Some of the criteria used in antiquity to decide whether a work was genuine or forged were the criticism of style, the analysis of vocabulary, the evaluation of teaching, and the discovery of anachronisms.¹⁶ And, people in antiquity, including early Christians, were quite familiar with such methods.¹⁷ For example, Dionysius of Alexandria resolved through a comparison of style and language with the Gospel of John that Revelation was not authored by the evangelist (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 7.25, 1-27);¹⁸ Eusebius also referred to and used these grounds when separating false apostolic writings from

¹⁰ Speyer, *Fälschung*, 114. See Speyer (*Fälschung*) for a full discussion of *Echtheitskritik* in antiquity amongst the Greeks and Romans (112-28), the Jews (152-55), and the church Fathers (179-210).

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, 123.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 152, 160.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 153.

¹⁶ Schnabel, "Kanon," 66.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 184. Speyer examines some of the criteria used in the *Echtheitskritik* of the church fathers which included: style and language (181-83), and chronology and other criteria (184-86). Newer criteria involved the lack of attestation by the apostolic church (186-90) and the absence of inspiration (190-92).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 182. Many agree (e.g. W. G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the NT* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1975], 471), however, that Dionysius is writing in connection against the apocalyptic doctrine of chiliasm, and thus says that Revelation was written by a John other than the apostle John; Dionysius wants to establish the dissimilarities between Revelation on the one hand, and the Gospel and Epistle of John on the other (cf. Eusebius, *Eccl Hist* 7.25,27).

genuine ones (*Ecclesiastical History* 3.25,7);¹⁹ and Jerome concluded with the help of style criticism that 1 and 2 Peter were written by different authors.²⁰

Early Church Evidence

Known early Christian responses to forgery are more numerous than Jewish responses to pseudepigraphy, and they do not affirm the practice in any way whatsoever (cf. Tertullian's comments in *On Baptism* 17 on the *Acts of Paul*; Serapion's remarks on the *Gospel of Peter* recorded in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* 6.12.2-4.; the reference in the *Muratorian Canon* to "forged" Pauline letters, etc.). The language used by early church leaders in reference to pseudonymous works clearly describes them as fraudulent and deceptive. Early Christians simply did not embrace pseudonymous works they viewed in such a pejorative manner. If discovered, they firmly rejected such writings as deceptive.

Not all critics agree. Some scholars argue that the early church was really only concerned about the content of works and not their authorship. However, this theory does not explain the exclusion from the church's canon of several forged pseudonymous writings which were orthodox in their content (e.g. the *Preaching of Peter*, the *Apocalypse of Peter*, the *Epistle of the Apostles*, the *Correspondence of Paul and Seneca*, the extant *Epistle to the Laodiceans*, etc.).

Other critics object that the evidence of later, Gentile Christian attitudes towards pseudepigrapha and forgery is anachronistic and should not be used to judge the first-century, Jewish-Christian phenomenon of pseudonymity. The fact, however, that the Jews themselves rejected pseudonymous works like *1 Enoch* and *4 Ezra* from the Hebrew canon helps render the latter theory untenable. Undeniably, second-century orthodox Christians strongly disapproved of pseudonymity and forgery, and it is improbable that Christians and Jews from an earlier era had a different opinion on the matter.

¹⁹ Schnabel, "Kanon," 184.

²⁰ Ibid. Speyer notes that Jerome then attempted to clarify the differences of style and language with the explanation that Peter may have had different interpreters.

Even more scholars note that the church's rejection of pseudonymity took place in a period when a great deal of heretical literature attributed to the apostles was circulating. Thus, the latter phenomenon possibly colored the way that orthodox churchmen, who were concerned about heresy, looked at all pseudonymity. The early church, however, could conceivably have responded differently—for example, by only screening the content of documents and not their authorship. Notably, the early Christians did no such thing; instead they utilized both standards when recognizing books as inspired of God and canonical. They rejected pseudonymous works explicitly written and forged in the apostles' names.²¹

New Testament Evidence

More so than the Old Testament, the New Testament contains passages which especially have a tremendous bearing on the question of pseudonymity and forgery in early Christianity. For example, in 2 Thessalonians 2:2 Paul warned the church against accepting the false teaching that “the day of the Lord had come.” He cautioned his readers that, no matter through what agency they had received this heresy—whether through “spirit, word, or letter”—he and his missionary associates had nothing to do with it. Paul would have objected to a pseudonymous letter being attributed to him which contained falsehood, wrong teaching, or material that he did not write. The apostle clearly puts a moratorium on pseudonymity in his name (cf. 2 Thessalonians 3:17).

The Pauline signatures in the NT (cf. 1 Cor 16:21; Gal 6:11; Col 4:18; 2 Thess 3:17; Phlm 19) indicated the apostle's use of a secretary and provided readers with a sign of his letters' authenticity and authority. Paul would have frowned upon someone using a facsimile of his signature in a pseudonymous letter which purported to be his.

In Revelation 22:18-19 John warned that no one was to tamper with what he had written in the book by rewriting it in any way. One can extrapolate from this interpretation of these verses to somebody writing another book and falsely attributing it to him by means of pseudonymity. John would object to a pseudonymous letter being attributed to him which contained falsehood or material that he did not write. To write a

²¹ Wilder, *Pseudonymity*, 123-47.

forged work and attribute it to somebody is a sort of extension of tampering with an existing document. Thus, to enlarge pseudonymously an existing body of literature—for example, the Pauline corpus—by adding a few inauthentic works is to tamper with Paul's actual writings.

Biblical Appeals for Truth

The Old and New Testaments contain several appeals for truth that are difficult to reconcile with the thinking of an author who had deliberately used forgery. If we start with the NT, we see in 1 Timothy 4:1-2 that Paul warned his readers not to embrace the doctrine of “deceitful spirits” and “hypocritical liars.” In Ephesians 4:15 he instructed his readers to “speak the truth in love.” In Ephesians 4:25 he exhorted the church to “put off falsehood and speak truthfully.” In Colossians 3:9 he admonished his readers: “Do not lie to one another.” Furthermore, the Holy Spirit, who indwells every believer (1 Cor 6:19; 12:13) and is described as the “Spirit of Truth” (John 14:17; 16:3), created an ethos in the Christian community in which pseudonymity and forgery would have been frowned upon and could not have flourished. Also, a careful study of the terms for “deception” (cf. the Greek word *apataō* and the entire Greek *pseud*—prefixed word group) reveals that a concept of legitimate deception for the NT is difficult to support.

Old Testament axioms and appeals for truth are in keeping with those found in the New Testament. For example, the Lord spoke to Moses and gave him several laws of holiness, one of which in Leviticus 19:11 says, “You must not steal. You must not act deceptively or lie to one another” (HCSB). Proverbs 12:22 teaches, “Lying lips are detestable to the Lord, but faithful people are His delight” (HCSB). Isaiah 63:8 describes God's people as those who “will not deal falsely” (NASB). Psalm 24:4 states that the one “who has not sworn deceitfully” (HCSB) may stand in the Lord's holy place, and in Psalm 43:1 the Psalmist pleads with the Lord to “rescue me from the deceitful and unjust man” (HCSB). While one can find several examples of people in the OT who used deception in mitigating and understandable circumstances (Abraham, Gen 12:13; 20:2; Isaac, Gen 26:7; Jacob, Gen 27:19; Elisha, 2 Kgs 6:19; David, 1 Sam 21:2; and Jehu, 2 Kgs 10:18–19), the OT clearly never condones it. Again, all of these examples would seem to create an environment in which forgery would have been disapproved of and not have thrived.

Internal Evidence from the New Testament

Scholars who point out that forgery was a problem in antiquity—unlike others who say that no concept of literary property existed among the ancients—follow the lead of David Meade and others, to say that the NT contains forgeries, e.g., 1, 2 Timothy and Titus, Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, and 2 Peter. To defend the latter thesis, they marshal arguments against the disputed letters of the NT. Those arguments usually focus on items like: (1) a different vocabulary and style than the purported author's style; (2) a lack of emphasis on characteristic doctrines taught by the supposed author; (3) occasional and situational details in the letters being later than the purported author's lifetime; and (4) the letters containing historical allusions to certain details which simply cannot be placed within the book of Acts. In the next section, we will look briefly at the authorship of the Pastoral Letters, three NT letters that many critical scholars consider to be forgeries.

The Pastoral Letters

Scholars cast more doubt on the authenticity of the Pastoral Epistles (1, 2 Timothy and Titus) than on any of the other Pauline letters.²² Some argue that the Pastorals were written after Paul's death by a writer who used the apostle's name to strengthen the authority of these letters.²³ Others suggest that these writings were composed by a disciple or later admirer of Paul who included some genuine notes from Paul in his work.²⁴

²² This section on the Pastorals is largely borrowed from Terry L. Wilder, "Pseudonymity and the New Testament," in *Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues* (ed. D. A. Black and D. S. Dockery; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 296–335.

²³ For example, Lewis R. Donelson, *Pseudepigraphy and Ethical Argument in the Pastoral Epistles* (Tübingen, Mohr, 1986). See also David Meade (*Pseudonymity and Canon* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986]) who argues that the pseudonym is an attribution of authoritative tradition.

²⁴ For example, P. N. Harrison, *The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles* (London: Oxford, 1921). More recently, see I. Howard Marshall, in collaboration with Philip H. Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999). He believes the Pastorals are not

Those who argue against the Pauline authorship of the Pastorals do so on the basis of the following (or at least similar) criteria.²⁵ First, scholars who hold to the inauthenticity of the Pastorals stress that the vocabulary and style of these letters differ from the other Pauline epistles.²⁶ Many words found in the PE do not occur in the other Pauline writings²⁷—for example, the term “godliness” (*eusebeia*, 1 Tim 6:11). Moreover, 175 different *hapax legomena* appear in the Pastoral Epistles that are found nowhere else in the NT²⁸—for example, the terms “slavetraders” (*andrapodistēs*, 1 Tim 1:10), “perjurers” (*etiorkos*, 1 Tim 1:10) and “integrity” (*aphthoria*, Titus 2:7). Stylistic differences also exist between the Pastorals and the rest of the Pauline corpus—for example, several particles are absent from the Pastoral Epistles but are present in the other Paulines.²⁹

Such contrasts lead many to believe that Paul did not write the Pastoral Epistles. However, this argument does not consider that the variations in subject-matter, occasion, purpose, and addressees may account for many of these differences.³⁰ Rather than pointing to a pseudo-author’s style, the specialized vocabulary and style in the PE arguably reflects instead Paul’s desire to communicate clearly to his audience. The use of a secretary by Paul may also explain the presence of many words in the Pastorals. Stylistic arguments tend to be quite subjective and unimpressive. Differences exist within the other Pauline letters that are just as extensive as those between the Pastorals and the rest of the Pauline corpus.³¹ Furthermore, the Pastoral Epistles are

pseudonymous but allonymous, i.e. a later compiler arranged Pauline traditions and materials without any intention to deceive his readers.

²⁵ The arguments used against the Pauline authorship of the Pastorals are extensive and quite technical and cannot be taken up in full here. For a fuller defense of Pauline authorship, see William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000).

²⁶ This difference is usually considered the most substantial and significant objection to the Pauline authorship of the PE.

²⁷ D. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downer’s Grove, IL.: IVP, 1990), 619.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 633.

³¹ For example, Paul’s letter to the Philippians contains many words that are not found in Paul’s other writings nor in the whole of the NT. Do we then conclude

simply too brief to determine with accuracy the writing habits of a particular author.³²

Second, defenders of pseudonymity in the Pastorals contend that the church structure in these letters is too advanced for Paul's time.³³ That is to say, the Pastorals are said to correspond to a later period when church government was more organized and controlled.³⁴ Moreover, opponents of authenticity often argue that the Pastoral Epistles reflect a church government of monarchical bishops. However, the fact that Paul appointed elders at the start of his missionary work strongly shows his concern for orderly church government (cf. Acts 14:23).³⁵ Other biblical passages also indicate that church structure played a key part in Paul's ministry (cf. Acts 20:17-28; Phil 1:1; see also Rom 12:8; 1 Thess 5:12). Furthermore, the instructions regarding overseers in 1 Timothy and Titus simply do not reflect the monarchical church government which began to develop in the second century.³⁶ For example, in Titus 1:5-7 the word "overseer" is used interchangeably with "elder," and since elders are to be appointed in every town, there is no indication of monarchical government.

Third, those who argue against the Pauline authorship of the Pastorals date the heresy opposed in these letters later than Paul's lifetime. In the second century, gnostic heretics came on the scene denying the resurrection of Christ and practicing both a moral license and rigid asceticism.³⁷ Some advocates of pseudonymity in the Pastorals argue that the words "myths" (*mythoi*) and "genealogies" (*genealogiai*) in 1 Timothy 1:4 pertain to a developed Gnosticism of the second-century.³⁸

that Philippians is pseudonymous? No scholar that I know of is willing to do so. The unique words found in Philippians, like those in the Pastorals, can be plausibly explained by Paul's specific purpose for writing these letters.

³² Terry L. Wilder, "Pseudonymity and the New Testament," *Interpreting the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 296-335; 325.

³³ Guthrie, *Introduction*, 615.

³⁴ *Ibid.* 616.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 625.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 627.

³⁷ Thomas D. Lea, "Pseudonymity and the New Testament," *New Testament Criticism and Interpretation*, ed. D. A. Black and D. S. Dockery (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991); Guthrie, *Introduction*, 617.

³⁸ Lea, "Pseudonymity," 554.

They also contend that the Greek term for “opposing arguments” (*antitheseis*, another *hapax*) in 1 Timothy 6:20 referred to the title of a second-century work written by the heretic Marcion. Others note that the false teaching in these letters contains many Jewish elements (1 Tim 1:7; Titus 1:10, 14; 3:9) as well as some ascetic characteristics.³⁹

The identity of the opponents in the Pastorals is still debated amongst scholars:⁴⁰ some say that the heresy opposed in the PE is some type of Judaism;⁴¹ others view the opposition as Jewish-Christian opponents to the Pauline mission;⁴² many say that the false teaching is a form of second-century Gnosticism;⁴³ still others identify the false teachers with an ascetic movement of some sort.⁴⁴ In any event, those who argue that the opponents in these letters are later than Paul—whether Jewish, ascetic, Gnostic, or a combination of these—need to consider that Jewish elements (cf. Gal 2) and asceticism (cf. Rom 14) also operated in Paul’s time, as well as Gnosticism in its incipient form, which likely stretched back into the first century. Consequently, the opposition combated in the PE does not require a date later than Paul’s lifetime.

Fourth, supporters of pseudonymity contend that the Pastorals do not emphasize characteristic Pauline doctrines like the Fatherhood of God, the believer’s union with Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the cross.⁴⁵ Many also suggest that too much of a concern for the transmission of “sound teaching,” i.e. tradition (1 Tim 2:4), and the use of creeds (cf. 1 Tim 3:16; 2 Tim 1:13-14; 2:2; Titus 2:11-14, etc.) in the

³⁹ Guthrie, *Introduction*, 628.

⁴⁰ The following characteristics are those provided in a summary by I. H. Marshall, in collaboration with P. H. Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 46–51.

⁴¹ E.g., see C. Spicq, *Les Épîtres Pastorales*, 4th ed., 2 vols., EBib (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1969), esp. 85–119.

⁴² See Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 47.

⁴³ This view enjoys the most support. E.g., see J. Roloff, *Der Erste Brief an Timotheus*, EKKNT (Zürich/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Benziger/Neukirchener, 1988), 228–38; L. Oberlinner, *Die Pastoralbriefe*, Dritte Folge, *Kommentar zum Titusbrief* Band XI/2, Herders theologischer Kommentar zum NT (Freiburg: Herder, 1996), 52–73; M. Goulder, “The Pastor’s Wolves: Jewish Christian Visionaries Behind the Pastoral Epistles,” *NovT* 38 (1996): 242–56.

⁴⁴ E.g., see D. R. MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle: The Battle for Paul in Story and Canon* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983).

⁴⁵ Guthrie, *Introduction*, 618.

Pastorals reflect Christianity at the end of the first century.⁴⁶ Standards of this nature, however, are not accurate criteria for determining authenticity. The so-called absence of typical Pauline themes is overstated. For example, the lack of references to the Holy Spirit in the Pastoral Epistles (found only in 1 Tim 4:1; 2 Tim 1:14; Titus 3:5) is not as big a problem as it first may seem. Colossians and 2 Thessalonians mention the Holy Spirit only once; Philippians also refers to the Spirit very few times. Moreover, the emphasis on Christian doctrine in the Pastorals does not require a later date. During his ministry, Paul stressed holding firmly to tradition (cf. 1 Cor 11:2), and often cited creedal sayings and hymns in his letters (cf. 1 Cor 15:3-5; Phil 2:6-8; Col 1:15-17, etc.).⁴⁷

Finally, opponents of the Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles argue that these letters contain historical allusions to Paul's life which cannot be placed within the book of Acts. For example, Paul has been with Timothy and left him in Ephesus to combat false teachers while he went to Macedonia (1 Tim 1:3); similarly, he has left Titus in Crete (Titus 1:5); Paul also referred to Onesiphorus who had been seeking for him in Rome (2 Tim 1:16-17); and he is now a prisoner (2 Tim 1:8, 16; cf. 4:16). This objection suggests that only what is recorded in the book of Acts may be considered authentic. Traditionally, defenders of the authenticity of the Pastorals respond to this argument with the theory that Paul was released from his imprisonment in Acts 28, travelled back to the East, and was later arrested and imprisoned in Rome again. Under this view, the references to Paul in the Pastorals cannot be placed within the data of Acts because they happened at a later date.

Those who hold to the Pauline authorship of the Pastorals also point out that the book of Acts does not record many details of Paul's life (cf. 2 Cor 11).⁴⁸ Thus, the fact that Acts does not record a second Pauline imprisonment in Rome is not unusual. If Paul had been martyred at the end of his imprisonment recorded in Acts 28, it is difficult to imagine that the author would have completed his work without mentioning this event.⁴⁹ Moreover, the fact that Paul expected to be released from prison in Philippians (1:19, 25; 2:24), while he did not in the Pastorals (2 Tim

⁴⁶ Guthrie, *Introduction*, 619.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 632.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 622.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 624.

4:6-8), also suggests a subsequent Roman imprisonment. Furthermore, a social-historical study of Paul in Roman custody in Acts 28 indicates that Paul was likely released.⁵⁰

External evidence from the early church also attests to the Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles. Several early church leaders accepted these letters as canonical and Pauline—for example, Ignatius, Polycarp, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian and Irenaeus. Eusebius, the early church historian, said, “The epistles of Paul are fourteen, all well known and beyond doubt.”⁵¹ These “fourteen epistles” included the Pastorals. Furthermore, the Pastoral Epistles are listed among the Pauline letters in the Muratorian Canon. The Pauline authorship of the Pastorals was not seriously questioned until the nineteenth century.

In light of the evidence, a resort to a forged authorship for the Pastoral Epistles is not necessary. They, like the rest of the New Testament writings, may be relied upon as authentic and trustworthy. Those who say that the Pastorals are forged need to take a closer look at the evidence for the onus of proof weighs heavily upon them.

Internal Evidence from the Old Testament

Often critical scholars will argue that forgeries can be found in the Old Testament. Since this is the case, they will say, it should then come as no surprise that forged works are also present in the NT. Amongst other books, these critics frequently point to the OT book of Daniel as being an example of such a work. But is Daniel a forgery?

Daniel

Daniel claims to be written by the prophet Daniel during the time of the Babylonian captivity in the sixth century B.C.⁵² In the third century A.D.,

⁵⁰Brian Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody. The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting*, Vol. 3, ed. Bruce W. Winter (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans/Carlisle: Paternoster, 1994), 191. He states, “The custody in Rome as Luke reports it and the probable material basis of the deliberations leading to that custody . . . constitute a significant and highly-placed Roman estimate of the trial’s probable outcome; i.e., that Paul will be released.”

⁵¹Eusebius, *Hist eccl* 3.3.

⁵²This section on the book of Daniel largely follows and extensively borrowed from the argument in the article by Stephen R. Miller, “Daniel, Book of,” in

the neo-Platonist Porphyry first proposed that Daniel was instead written by an unknown Jew during the second century B.C. who wrote under the false name of Daniel. The purpose for composing such a work was to encourage Jews as they resisted the Syrian-Greek tyrant named Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who ruled from 175 to 164 B.C. during the Maccabean era. If the thesis above is true, then Daniel would be the last of the OT books written.

Critical scholars who place Daniel in the second century B.C. first say that the book contains several unhistorical accounts and *vaticinia ex eventu*, i.e., prophecies after the event. They generally think that the author wrote chapters 7-12 and introduced his material with the stories in chapters 1-6, taken from a Danielic body of writings dating from the prior century. They seem neither to believe in predictive prophecy nor think that a sixth-century writer could have known such historical details about the purported setting. For them, the so-called historical inaccuracies concerning events prior to the second century indicate a later date of writing. However, Josephus, the first-century Jewish historian, made plain that Daniel's prophecies were known prior to the time of Alexander the Great (d. 323 BC).⁵³ Moreover, the book's historical reliability has been often established by archaeological discoveries (e.g., the historical authenticity of Belshazzar and Jerusalem's invasion by the armies of Babylon ca. 605 B.C.). Further, the supposed historical inaccuracies, when closely examined, can be reasonably explained.

Second, those who place Daniel in the second century B.C. argue that the book's position in the Hebrew canon with the Writings instead of the Prophets indicates a late date of writing. This objection, however, is not insurmountable. The Masoretes may have been influential in assigning Daniel to the Writings because he was not appointed or ordained as a prophet; further, much of the book bears the character of history than it does prophecy.⁵⁴

Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, gen eds. Chad Brand, Charles Draper, and Archie England (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 386-88. The arguments used against the historicity of Daniel are extensive, quite technical, and cannot be taken up in full here. For a fuller defense, see Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, NAC 18 (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 1994).

⁵³ Flavius Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 11.8.5.

⁵⁴ Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996), 424.

Third, those who hold to a Maccabean thesis for Daniel contend that the language of the book indicates a late date. Daniel contains some words of Persian, Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic. This mixture of words has led scholars to put forward a late date for the book. However, the presence of such language does not necessitate a late date. Daniel finished his book after Persia conquered Babylon. He also served in the new government's administration. So, the presence of Persian loanwords is understandable. These Persian words and expressions seem to provide substantial evidence for an early date of writing because they are old words that stopped being used around 300 B.C. The presence of three Greek loanwords in the book (3:5, 7, 10, 15) also do not demand a late date because archaeology has shown that Greece and other Mediterranean Sea nations had considerable contact with each other prior to the sixth century B.C. Conversely, if Daniel was written in the second century during Greek rule over Palestine, one would think that numerous Greek words would instead be present in the text. Daniel's Aramaic shows noticeable parallels with the early Imperial Aramaic found in texts like the Elephantine papyri that date from the fifth century B.C. or earlier. Furthermore, Daniel's Aramaic does not correspond with later examples of Aramaic discovered at Qumran, e.g., like that found in the Genesis Apocryphon.

Fourth, arguments for dating Daniel based on its theology are on shaky ground because if Daniel can be reasonably and objectively dated to the sixth century by other means, as I think it can, then the theology within the book would be of the same time period.

Those who hold to the traditional view that Daniel was written in the sixth century B.C. maintain that the history and predictive prophecy in the book is dependable, accurate, and supernatural. First, those who argue for Daniel's historicity contend that Jesus and NT authors thought that Daniel composed the book (cf. Matt 24:15 with Mark 13:14; Matthew 26:64 with Mark 14:62 and Luke 22:69; Heb. 11:32-34). Second, they point out that the book declares to have been written by the prophet Daniel (Dan 1:7; 12:4), to be the story of a person who actually went through the exile and resided in Babylon, and to be a prophetic forecast of events in the future (Dan 7:2, 4, 6-28; 8; 9:2-27; 10:2-21; 12:4-8). Third, eight manuscripts of Daniel were discovered at Qumran. One of them (4QDan^c) dates to ca. 125 B.C. and may have even been written earlier. This fact actually favors an earlier date for Daniel

because if the book was originally written in the second century, then it would not have gained widespread acceptance by the Qumran community in such a short time, roughly 40 years. R. K. Harrison writes that “there would ... have been insufficient time for Maccabean compositions to be circulated, venerated, and accepted as canonical Scripture by a Maccabean sect.”⁵⁵ Fourth, the Septuagint is the Greek translation of the Hebrew OT by Jewish scholars in Egypt that was widely used by Diaspora Jews. Advocates of the Maccabean hypothesis propose that 30 years after Daniel was composed, it was received into the Hebrew canon, carried to Egypt, and there then translated into Greek. The latter proposal is improbable. Scholars by and large concur that the Pentateuch was translated into Greek in the mid-third century B.C. Arguably, all of the OT books were translated around the same time. Surely Daniel was translated into Greek by ca. 130 B.C. when Ben-Sirach’s grandson composed the prologue to Ecclesiasticus. Fifth, Ezekiel mentions Daniel three times in his book (14:14, 20; 28:3). These references from the sixth-century prophet would seem to decide the matter in favor of the traditional view. However, Miller explains,

Since the discoveries at Ras-Shamra . . . scholars who accept the late date have attempted to explain these passages by declaring that Ezekiel was referring to a mythological figure named Danel, who appears in the Ugaritic epic, “The Tale of Aqhat.” A devastating argument against the theory that Ezekiel’s Daniel is this Ugaritic hero is that Danel was an idolater! Ezekiel must have been referring to the author of the book of Daniel. If so, the historicity of Daniel and his book would seem to be established.⁵⁶

The Old Testament book of Daniel can be defended as historically authentic. In light of the evidence, a resort to a forged authorship for Daniel is not necessary. Like the rest of the Old Testament, the book may be relied upon as authentic and trustworthy. Those who say that Daniel is a forged book should closely examine all of the evidence and consider the possibility of miracles and predictive prophecy.

⁵⁵ R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 1127.

⁵⁶ Miller, “Book of Daniel,” 387.

Conclusion

Did the authors of certain biblical books lie about their identities, using the names of apostles or prophets or whomever in order to gain a hearing for their works or to invest them with authority that they themselves did not have? No doubt such writings were in circulation, many from Gnostic and other groups, but when discovered, they were always soundly rejected, most notably by the early church. For example, Asian church elders ousted a colleague from his post for composing a forgery (cf. Tertullian, *On Baptism* 17), writing out of “love for Paul” the apocryphal *Acts of Paul*, which included the pseudo-apostolic letter of 3 *Corinthians*.⁵⁷ Despite the presbyter’s profession that he had meant well, his action warranted removal from office. The elders arguably removed him for writing a forgery, either writing a work that fictitiously bore Paul’s name or for composing a fiction about the apostle. Likewise, Serapion, bishop of Antioch, rejected the use of the apocryphal *Gospel of Peter* in the church at Rhossus.⁵⁸ He had initially allowed the church to read the book because he thought it was authentic. However, when he further examined the work, he discovered that it contained false teaching and forbade its use. Serapion rejected the *Gospel of Peter* because of its heresy and its forged authorship. This documentary evidence is in keeping with the tenor of all that we have seen in this chapter.

Indeed, any alleged forgery present in either the OT or NT would have to have had successfully escaped from some intense scrutiny. As we have seen in a previous chapter written by Darrell Bock, Paul Wegner, and myself, we possess the right canon of Scripture and we also have the correct OT and NT books, none of which, I am convinced, are forgeries.

Those who say that forgeries exist in the Bible really need to take a closer look at the evidence. The onus of proof weighs heavily upon them. As we have seen, any objections to the authenticity of biblical books can be plausibly answered.⁵⁹ The evidence we possess points to the trustworthiness of Scripture.

⁵⁷ Tertullian, *On Baptism* 17.

⁵⁸ Eusebius, *Hist eccl* 6.12, 2ff.

⁵⁹ See Terry L. Wilder, “Pseudonymity and the New Testament,” in *Interpreting the New Testament*, eds. D. A. Black and D. S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 296-335.