

Pseudepigraphy and Canon¹

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In the New Testament canon the apostle Paul is presented as the author of thirteen epistles.² It is often defended - and I agree with that opinion - that some of these epistles, Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians and the Pastoral Epistles are pseudepigraphic documents³, meaning that other people than Paul wrote these letters and passed them off as epistles by Paul. Others argue that all these thirteen epistles were written by Paul himself.⁴ A third possibility is to defend a position somewhere in the middle: some scholars consider the Pastorals as non authored by Paul, while they are divided regarding Ephesians, Colossians and 2 Thessalonians.

These thirteen 'Pauline' epistles were included in the canon because of their apostolic authority. Important criteria to be accepted in the church were the content of these 'apostolic testimonies' and the time of their origin. The writings had to come from the time close to the lifetime of Jesus and the apostles and their disciples.⁵ Though authenticity was certainly not the main criterion for the books to be read in church and to be included in the canon we cannot say that the churches or the church leaders were indifferent to the authenticity or inauthenticity of these documents. The authenticity of the documents used in church was presupposed. In the *Canon Muratori* 63-67 it is argued that two 'Pauline' epistles, the epistle to the Laodiceans and the epistle to the Alexandrians, are forged by the Marcionites. These epistles could not be read in church.⁶ This indicates that besides apostolic authority and time of origin authenticity of a document was important to be included in the New Testament canon.⁷ Eusebius tells us that Serapion of Antioch (living at about 200) had argued, writing about Peter and the apostles: τὰ δὲ ὀνόματι αὐτῶν ψευδεπίγραφα ὡς ἔμπειροι παραιτούμεθα, γινώσκοντες ὅτι τὰ τοιαῦτα οὐ παρελάβομεν, but with our knowledge we repudiate the pseudepigraphic

¹ This is a slightly revised and extended version of a paper read at the 2000 *World Congress on Religion in Capetown*. I am indebted to Ms drs. J.W. van Arentsals for her helpful comments on this paper.

² For this paper I will restrict myself to 'Pauline' epistles, though the problem of pseudepigraphy has to do with other New Testament documents as well.

³ See for example H.-M. Schenke, K.M. Fischer, *Einleitung in die Schriften des neuen Testaments* I (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1978) 165, 181, 194, 217; H. Köster, *Einführung in das Neue Testament* (GLB; Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1980) 679, 702, 705, 736.

⁴ See D. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (London: Tyndale, 1970) 507, 554, 573, 620.

⁵ Cf. H. von Campenhausen, *Die Entstehung der christlichen Bibel* (BHT 39; Tübingen: Mohr, 1968) 380-1: "Der Inhalt des prophetischen bzw. Apostolischen Zeugnisses ist entscheidend [...]. Die maßgebenden Zeugnisse müssen der christusnahen Ursprungszeit der Apostel und Apostelschüler entstammen."

⁶ See for the Latin text F.W. Grosheide, *Some Early Lists of the Books of the New Testament* (TMUA 1; Leiden: Brill, 1948) 10-11; cf. W. Schneemelcher, *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen* I (Tübingen: Mohr, 1990) 29 and see G.F. Hahneman, *The Muratorian Fragment and the Development of the Canon* (OTM; Oxford: Clarendon, 1992) 196-200.

⁷ Cf. A. Wikenhauser, J. Schmid, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (Freiburg/Basel/Wien: Herder, 1973) 41, 63. See also *Constitutiones Apostolorum* VI,16 in: F.X. Funk, *Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum* I (Paderborn: Schoeningh, 1905) 339 in which it is argued that because of pseudepigraphic writings the addressees must be alert to heresies.

documents bearing their name, knowing that these documents have not been handed down to us.⁸ The text of 2 Thess 2.2 exhibits an ambivalent attitude towards pseudepigraphic letters. In this verse the author says that the readers do not need to be disturbed through a letter ὡς δι' ἡμῶν, allegedly written by us.⁹ The author, a pseudepigraphic author himself, exhibits with these words the general feeling that pseudepigraphic epistles cannot have as much authority as authentic epistles. In this text the author is negative about a possible pseudepigraphic letter.¹⁰ Since the end of the eighteenth century the authenticity of several New Testament writings has been questioned.¹¹ In the nineteenth century even the authenticity of all 'Pauline' epistles is contested by some scholars, especially in Germany, in Switzerland and in the Netherlands.¹² It is obvious that the statement that some epistles were not authentic, but pseudepigraphic, could raise problems. Can we continue to speak about apostolic authority of these writings if they were written at the end of the first century or even in the second century? And how do we judge the forged writings of authors who issued them as letters written by Paul? Meade writes: "The question is how forged documents can serve as vehicles of inspired religious truth."¹³ Nevertheless the phenomenon of pseudepigraphic writings did not get the people of the nineteenth century into trouble. When in the commentaries the pseudonymity of some writings was accepted, it was often argued that pseudepigraphy was not uncommon in the beginning of the Christian era.¹⁴ So pseudepigraphy should not be an argument to disqualify any New

⁸ See Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* VI.12.3 in: E. Schwartz, *Eusebius. Kirchengeschichte* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1914) 232.

⁹ These words point to a potential pseudepigraphic letter. See E.J. Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians* (*Sacra Pagina* 11; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1995) 325, 345; E. Verhoef, *De brieven aan de Tessalonicenzen* (Kampen: Kok, 1998) 255. Referring to 1 Thessalonians the author of 2 Thessalonians says: ἐπιστολῇ ἡμῶν, a letter of ours; see 2 Thess 2.15. The particle ὡς gives the words ὡς δι' ἡμῶν a subjective aspect; cf. ὡς in Rom 13.13; 1 Cor 3.15; Heb 11.29. See N. Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek III* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1963) 158. In E.G. Hoffmann, H. von Siebenthal, *Griechische Grammatik zum Neuen Testament* (Riehen: Immanuel, 1985) 449 it is said with regard to this verse: "ein Brief als (wäre er - wie lügnerisch behauptet wird -) von uns."

¹⁰ Cf. Galenus, *De libris propriis. Praefatio*, in: I. Marquardt, I. Mueller, G. Helmreich, *Claudii Galeni Pergameni. Scripta Minora* 2 (BSGRT; Leipzig: Teubner, 1891, 91. This text tells that an educated man immediately throw away a book (by Galenus), discovering it was pseudepigraphic.

¹¹ P. Pokorny, 'Pseudepigraphie' 1, *TRE* 27.645: "Besonders im 19. Jahrhundert haben die Ergebnisse der kritischen Untersuchung [...] des Corpus Paulinum deutlich gemacht, daß es in der Bibel Pseudepigraphen gibt [...]"

¹² See for the so-called 'Dutch Radicals' H. Detering, *Paulusbrieve ohne Paulus? Die Paulusbrieve in der holländischen Radikalkritik* (Kontexte 10; Frankfurt am Main/Berlin/Bern/New York/Paris/Wien: Peter Lang, 1992); E. Verhoef, *W.C. van Manen. Een Hollandse Radicale theoloog* (Kampen: Kok, 1994); E. Verhoef, *Die holländische Radikale Kritik*, in: R. Bieringer (ed.), *The Corinthian Correspondence* (BETL 125; Leuven: Peeters, 1996) 427-32; E. Verhoef, Willem Christiaan van Manen: a Dutch radical New Testament scholar, *HTS* 55/1 (March 1999), 221-7.

¹³ D.G. Meade, *Pseudonymity and Canon* (WUNT 39; Tübingen: Mohr, 1987) 2.

¹⁴ N. Brox, *Die Pastoralbriefe* (RNT 7; Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1969) 61: "Diese literarische Gattung stellt [...] nichts Ungewöhnliches dar, sondern gehört zu den Stilmitteln und Redeformen, deren sich die biblischen Autoren bedienten, ohne daß der Charakter der biblischen Botschaft dadurch Schaden nähme." Cf.

Testament writing and the pseudepigraphic character of some epistles should not throw doubt upon the reliability of these writings.¹⁵ In this manner De Wette writes with regard to the Pastoral Epistles that these epistles must not be judged according to our standards. In his view we cannot call the making of forgeries a deceit.¹⁶ It is surprising to see that De Wette concludes that these epistles nevertheless do not have the same canonical value as the authentic Pauline epistles.¹⁷ The Dutch scholar Bolkestein, writing about 2 Thessalonians, argues that someone other than Paul used 1 Thessalonians and paraphrased this letter and made it topical.¹⁸ But according to him that should not worry us, because such behaviour was not uncommon.¹⁹ In the same way Brox speaks about the “aktualisierende Veränderung der historischen Apostelpredigt.”²⁰ Meade argues that the author of the Pastoral Epistles “uses great freedom and creativity in weaving together Pauline and other traditional material in a conscious effort to actualize Pauline tradition.”²¹ Menken writes with regard to 2 Thessalonians:

This kind of pseudonymity should not be labelled as ‘forgery’. This latter qualification implies a negative moral judgment, and we shall see that in all probability the author of 2 Thessalonians, and the authors of comparable pseudonymous documents, did not consider their writings as products of fraud. We should try to assess such writings by the standards that were accepted in the environment in which they originated.²²

Menken argues that the authors of the pseudepigraphic documents often acted this way with the intention to demonstrate “that their wisdom derived from their master, and that they only

L. Oberlinner, *Kommentar zum ersten Timotheusbrief* (HThK 11/2; Freiburg/Basel/Wien: Herder, 1994) XLII-XLV; M.J.J. Menken, *2 Thessalonians* (*New Testament Readings*; London/New York: Routledge, 1994) 40-1.

¹⁵ Cf. W.C. van Manen, De hoofdbrieven van Paulus, *De Tijdspiegel* 1889 I, 424: “Mocht men zich nog stooten aan den vorm, die den naam van Paulus deed gebruiken als schrijver van brieven, die eerst lange tijd na zijn verscheiden ontstonden, men bedenke dan toch dat die tijden niet waren onze tijden. [...] Joden en Christenen hadden deze zede met de toenmalige Heidenen gemeen.”

¹⁶ W.M.L. de Wette, *Kurze Erklärung der Briefe an Titus, Timotheus und die Hebräer* (KEH; Leipzig: Weidmann, 1844) 120-1: “Die Unterschiebung dieser Briefe muss man nicht nach dem Masstabe unsrer heutigen Begriffe von schriftstellerischer Wahrhaftigkeit sondern nach dem Geiste des Alterthums beurtheilen. [...] Einen Betrug können wir die von unsrem Verf. gewählte Form unter dem Namen Pauli Warnungen und Belehungen an sein Zeitalter zu richten, schon darum nicht nennen, weil ihn keine schlechte sondern eine gute Absicht leitete.”

¹⁷ De Wette, *Kurze Erklärung*, 121: “Ihrer Entstehung und ihrem Inhalte nach haben diese Briefe natürlich nicht die kanonische Gültigkeit, die den ächten Briefen P. zukommt.”

¹⁸ M.H. Bolkestein, *De brieven aan de Tessalonicenzen* (*De Prediking van het Nieuwe Testament*; Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1970) 174; cf. Oberlinner, *Kommentar*, XLV: “Auf dieser Linie der Aktualisierung und Interpretation des ‘Paulus’ liegen die paulinische Pseudepigrapha [...]”

¹⁹ Bolkestein, *Tessalonicenzen*, 174.

²⁰ Brox, *Pastoralbriefe*, 62.

²¹ Meade, *Pseudonymity*, 131.

²² Menken, *2 Thessalonians*, 40. Marshall does not like the word ‘pseudonymity’ for New Testament writings. He proposes to use the word ‘allonymity’, but that does not change the situation. See I.H. Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles* (ICC; Edinburgh: Clark, 1999) 92.

made his teaching topical for their own time.²³ But in that case these authors have gone to great lengths to achieve their purpose; see the striking remarks in 2 Thess 3.17; 2 Tim 4.13. Besides this one wonders why not authors as Clemens Romanus, Ignatius and Polycarpus acted in the same way and mentioned Paul as the sender of their epistles.

It seems to me that authors argue that pseudepigraphy was an accepted phenomenon in order to save these epistles for the canon.²⁴ It is my view as well that the pseudepigraphic epistles should keep their place in the canon, but for historical and oecumenical reasons and not because the churches of the first and second centuries were indifferent to pseudepigraphy. Contrary to Menken I think that these pseudepigraphic writings should be called 'forgeries'.²⁵ Moreover, it should be asked if it is true that pseudepigraphy was an accepted phenomenon. Authors who argue that all these thirteen 'Pauline' epistles are authentic, say on the contrary that pseudepigraphy was not an accepted phenomenon at all.²⁶ I would like to argue that we do have pseudepigraphic writings in the New Testament though pseudepigraphy was not a generally accepted phenomenon both inside and outside the church.²⁷ The pseudepigraphic character of the epistles was not known, otherwise they would not have been accepted.²⁸ Besides this it is important to make distinctions between the pseudepigraphic epistles according to the author's intention.

Pseudepigraphy can be found in Judaism, in Christianity and in the profane literature in the centuries before and after the beginning of our era.²⁹ Ecclesiastes and Deutero-Isaiah can be

²³ Menken, *2 Thessalonians*, 41. Cf. Tertullianus' remarks about the gospels of Mark and Luke and their relation to Peter and Paul in Tertullianus, *Adversus Marcionem*, 4.5.3-4 (CChr.SL; Turnhout: Brepols, 1954, 551).

²⁴ Cf. E.E. Ellis, *The Making of the New Testament Documents (Biblical Interpretation 39; Leiden: Brill, 1999)* 324: "The hypothesis of innocent apostolic pseudepigrapha appears to be designed to defend the canonicity of certain New Testament writings [...]"

²⁵ B.D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 344 thinks it probable that "the refusal to talk about New Testament forgeries is not based on historical grounds but on faith commitments."

²⁶ T.D. Lea, H.P. Griffin, *1,2 Timothy. Titus (The New American Commentary 34; Nashville: Broadman, 1992)* 38; see also Guthrie, *Introduction*, 671-84 on Epistolary Pseudepigraphy.

²⁷ Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 344: "despite its common occurrence, forgery was almost universally condemned by ancient authors (except among members of some of the philosophical schools)." J. Roloff, *Der erste Brief an Timotheus* (EKKNT 15; Zürich: Benziger/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1988) 37: it is clear "daß die literarische Fälschung in der Antike keineswegs ein selbstverständliches, allgemein akzeptiertes Stilmittel gewesen ist [...]"

²⁸ Guthrie, *Introduction*, 680: "if pseudepigrapha must on the basis of criticism be admitted within the New Testament Canon, they must have been received without their recipients being aware of their true character." P. Pokorny, 'Pseudepigraphie' 1, *TRE* 27.645 argues that we have in the New Testament pseudepigraphic epistles "und zwar auch solche, welchen ihre bewußt falsche Verfasserangabe zur kanonisierung verholfen hat (z. B. 2. Petrusbrief)."

²⁹ Over the last few decades many authors have written on pseudepigraphy. Besides the works already discussed I can mention only a few here: W. Speyer, *Die literarische Fälschung im heidnischen und christlichen Altertum* (HAW 1.2; München: Beck, 1971); N. Brox, *Falsche Verfasserangaben. Zur Erklärung der frühchristlichen*

called pseudepigraphic writings. The Epistle of Aristeas, the correspondence between Paul and Seneca, the so-called third epistle to the Corinthians, the Codices Pseudo-Isidoriani and many others belong to the pseudepigraphic writings. These documents purport to have been written by someone other than the real author.

I would like to make some remarks on these pseudepigraphic writings. In some cases we have to reckon with the possibility that several documents became known as written by a former famous author by mistake.³⁰ In the case of Ecclesiastes and Deutero-Isaiah, the authors presumably did not intend to pass off their writings as written by Solomon and Isaiah, respectively. But their writings were subsumed under the much older tradition of wisdom literature³¹ and of prophecies initiated by Isaiah.³²

The author of the Epistle of Aristeas had a very specific purpose: he wanted to show the supremacy of the Jewish law and he wanted to argue that the Greek translation of the Jewish law should be considered "a genuine equivalent of the Torah."³³ He tried to reach his purpose by a fictitious conversation between the high priest Eleazar and Aristeas himself and by a story about seventy-two scholars who translated the Hebrew text into Greek. These events would be dated in the first half of the third century B.C. However, the Epistle of Aristeas has not been written by someone called Aristeas who lived early in the third century, but is dated in the second century B.C.³⁴ This epistle describes a situation which never existed. The author wrote an epistle which should demonstrate that even the Egyptian authorities had much respect for the Jewish law. It is very doubtful if this method was ethically acceptable both for Jews and gentiles.

The next example is the correspondence between Paul and Seneca. In these letters the philosopher Seneca expresses his admiration for the Pauline epistles. He mentions the epistle to the Galatians and the epistles to the Corinthians. In the seventh epistle he lets us know that even the emperor Nero was touched by Paul's epistles. But this correspondence between Paul and Seneca was written in the fourth century with the purpose of showing that Paul and

Pseudepigraphie (SBS 79; Stuttgart: KBW, 1975); M.L. Stirewalt, 'Forgery and Greek Epistolography' in: idem, *Studies in Ancient Greek Epistolography (Resources for Biblical Study 27; Atlanta: Scholars, 1993) 27-42.*

³⁰ Anonymous writings could become pseudonymous documents; cf. Pokorny, 'Pseudepigraphie' 1, *TRE* 27.646-8; N. Brox, *Pseudepigraphie*, in: S. Döpp, W. Geerlings (eds.), *Lexikon der antiken christlichen Literatur* (Freiburg/Basel/Wien: Herder, 1999) 526.

³¹ Pokorny, 'Pseudepigraphie' 1, *TRE* 27.649: in this way "hat man die weisheitliche Tradition unter dem Namen von Salomo gesammelt [...] weil er der traditionelle Weisheitsträger war [...]"

³² Pokorny, 'Pseudepigraphie' 1, *TRE* 27.649 speaks about "das jesajanische Schrifttum, wo mit dem Werk des Propheten (Jes 1-39), spätere, thematisch verwandte Texte [...] verbunden und weiterhin als Jesajas Werk tradiert wurden."

³³ E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.-A.D. 135)* revised and edited by G. Vermes, F. Millar, M. Goodman, 3.1 (Edinburgh: Clark, 1986) 679; Speyer, *Die literarische Fälschung*, 157: "Um den literarischen Wert des Pentateuch zu erhöhen, erfand man das anerkennende Zeugnis des Aristeasbriefes."

³⁴ See Schürer, *The History*, 680 and K. Müller, 'Aristeasbrief', *TRE* 3.724.

Seneca were in contact with each other and appreciated each other.³⁵ Apart from these fourth century epistles there is not any evidence of a meeting between Paul and Seneca. It seems impossible that Nero would have read the Pauline epistles and would have been touched by them. The author gives a false impression of things. He tries to make a connection between the Roman philosopher Seneca and the Christian Paul and he does so for apologetic purposes.³⁶ The third epistle to the Corinthians can also be considered a pseudepigraphic writing. Already Tertullianus was aware of the fact that this writing was pseudepigraphic. He writes concerning this letter that the author, a presbyter in Asia Minor, had been discharged from his function because he had passed it off as an epistle written by Paul.³⁷ In this epistle, part of the Acts of Paul, the author wanted to defend the Christian faith against heresies and he meant to strengthen the Christian community in a dangerous and threatening time.³⁸ Ehrman writes about this presbyter: “[...] he wanted to show what Paul would have written from beyond the grave, had he been able to address the problems that had arisen in the church.”³⁹ Nonetheless, his way of acting was not accepted and the presbyter had to give up his office in the church. He was not excommunicated, however, and in later times his writing was even read by church members. He was not dismissed because of heresies but just because he had made known this epistle as an epistle written by Paul.⁴⁰ This makes it obvious that this way of forging was not acceptable.⁴¹

The last example I would like to mention are the so-called Codices Pseudo-Isidoriani.⁴² These writings were written in the ninth century in order to prove from ‘older canon rules’ that the church should be free and independent from secular authorities. The Codices Pseudo-Isidoriani purported to have been written several centuries earlier, which would give them the authority of old ecclesiastical canons. It is obvious that all these forged canon laws can be considered falsifications. The authors used the literary means of a forgery in order to reach their purpose.

³⁵ Speyer, *Die literarische Fälschung*, 258; R. McLachlan Wilson, ‘Apokryphe Episteln’, *TRE* 3.349; C. Römer, *Der Briefwechsel zwischen Seneca und Paulus*, in: W. Schneemelcher, *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen* 2 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1989) 44-5.

³⁶ P. de Labriolle wrote in 1924, quoted in NDIEC 8, 120: “The apocryphal collection of letters exchanged between Seneca and St Paul had been forged in order to combat by indirect means in the minds of the lettered pagans their repugnance to the form of the *Epistles*.”

³⁷ See Tertullianus *De Baptismo* 17.4 in: R.F. Refoulé, M. Drouzy, *Tertullien. Traité du Baptême* (SC 35; Paris: Cerf, 1952) 90-1.

³⁸ Speyer, *Die literarische Fälschung*, 211; McLachlan Wilson, ‘Apokryphe Episteln’, *TRE* 3.344-5; cf. W. Schneemelcher, *Paulusakten*, in: W. Schneemelcher, *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen* 2 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1989) 214.

³⁹ Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 342.

⁴⁰ P. Vielhauer, *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur: Einleitung in das Neue Testament, die Apokryphen und die Apostolischen Väter* (GLB; Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1975) 705.

⁴¹ Speyer, *Die literarische Fälschung*, 211: “Während der Verfasser des zweiten Petrusbriefes unentdeckt blieb und sogar zu der Ehre kam, daß seine Trugschrift in den Kanon des Neuen Testaments aufgenommen wurde, mißlang dies dem Presbyter [...]”

⁴² See G. May, ‘Die Pseudoisidorischen Fälschungen’, *TRE* 19.10-13.

All these writings are pseudepigraphic, but the difference between them cannot be overlooked. The only thing these given examples have in common is that they have been written by someone other than the person mentioned as the writer or the sender.⁴³ Radically different writings are called 'pseudepigraphic'. As was said above it is important to make distinctions according to the intention of the authors of such writings.⁴⁴ They may have wanted to write a literary document, for example a novel on a fictional topic, with the intention of making it known to many people. Possibly some documents are just exercises done in school. Others wrote a philosophical treatise and attributed it to a famous teacher because they thought everything to be derived from this teacher. Some authors just wanted to make money with their products. And in the case of the Codices Pseudo-Isidoriani it is obvious that the authors used the means of falsification to defend the position of the pope against the increasing power of secular authorities. But it is also possible that they addressed an epistle to a particular community using someone else's name with the intention of getting more influence. It does make a lot of difference for the exegesis if such writings are detected as falsifications or not. Did a council or a synod really speak about the position of the pope in this way? And with regard to the Epistle of Aristeas we should ask if Ptolemy really read the Mosaic laws and honestly appreciated them. In the case of the correspondence between Paul and Seneca it would be very important to know if these letters are authentic and if Seneca truly had much esteem for the Pauline epistles. But if this correspondence is exposed as a pseudepigraphic document we cannot be sure anymore that it tells us anything reliable about Seneca's assessment of the Pauline epistles. The significance of knowing the status of a text can be easily demonstrated in the light of the 'Hitler Diaries'. If these 'diaries' had been genuine, they would have taught us more about Hitler. Since they are not, we cannot expect them to tell us anything useful about Hitler. There may be truths in such documents, but we cannot rely on them. On the other hand, I do not wish to imply that we always find true observations in authentic documents. They can contain untruths.

We may conclude that it is very important to discern the status of a text. This statement concerns the New Testament writings as well. If some New Testament epistles are shown to be pseudepigraphic writings, it is the task of the exegetes to discover the intention of the author. Why did the authors write down that their letters originated from Paul? And what were their intentions? These authors probably did not write these epistles with the intention to gain financial profit. And they did not write a philosophical treatise attributing it to a famous teacher. In the case of 2 Thessalonians the author had an opinion regarding the coming of the Day of the Lord which was different from Paul's⁴⁵, but he used Paul's name in order to have more authority. And the author of the Pastorals thought the authentic Pauline epistles were insufficient for the problems of the young church of the generations after Paul and he wanted

⁴³ The difference between sender and writer may not be stressed too strongly; see E. Verhoef, Numerus, Sekretär und Authentizität, *Protokolle zur Bibel* 4 (1995), 48-58 and E. Verhoef, The Senders of the Letters to the Corinthians and the Use of "I" and "We", in: R. Bieringer (ed.), *The Corinthian Correspondence* (BETL 125; Leuven: Peeters, 1996) 417-25.

⁴⁴ The fifth century church father Salvianus wrote about the methods and the aims of pseudepigraphic writers. See his ninth letter in: G. Lagarrigue, *Salvien de Marseille. Oeuvres* I (SC 176; Paris: Cerf, 1971) 120-33.

⁴⁵ L.J. Lietaert Peerbolte, *The Antecedents of Antichrist: A Traditio-Historical Study of the Earliest Christian Views on Eschatological Opponents* (Leiden: private publication, 1995) 63; Richard, *Thessalonians*, 19; Verhoef, *Tessalonicensen*, 34, 40-1.

to settle these problems. The aim of these pseudepigraphic writers was to get influence in the addressed communities or generally to get their own opinions accepted in the whole church.⁴⁶ For this purpose they used someone else's name in order to have more authority, in the case of the Deutero-Paulines the name of the apostle Paul. We cannot but conclude that these texts are forgeries. And forging epistles was not commonly accepted.⁴⁷ It is unthinkable that forging epistles like for example the epistles sent to members of the Jewish community in Elephantine would have been accepted.⁴⁸ We must differentiate between literary documents like novels, poems or tragedies on the one hand and epistles on the other hand. Epistles were written to communicate with someone or with a group when oral communication was impossible for reasons of distance. A novel, poem or tragedy is written in order to make such a document known to many people.

Finally, if some of the New Testament writings are known as pseudepigraphic writings, we have new possibilities for the exegesis of these documents. It is very important to study the pseudepigraphic epistles as documents from a later generation. They can throw light upon the development of the church in the time after Paul. This is an opportunity we should not miss. Moreover, some 'difficult' texts can be explained now. The authors of the pseudepigraphic epistles knew they were wrong and they tried to remain unnoticed. They did all they could to make a reasonable case for the authenticity of these epistles.⁴⁹ That is the reason they wrote statements like 2 Thess 3.17 and 2 Tim 4.13. In the first text we read: "The greeting with my own hand, from Paul. This is a sign in every letter. This is the way I write." Why such a "ponderous" statement?⁵⁰ The only reason I can think of is to prevent thoughts of forgery.⁵¹ In 2 Tim 4.13 it is written: "When you come, bring the cloak I left with Carpus at Troas".⁵² J.M.

⁴⁶ Lietaert Peerbolte, *Antecedents*, 67-8 argues regarding 2 Thessalonians: "the author [...] tried to dispose of an authentic letter of Paul. He obviously hoped that his own writing would replace the letter of Paul."

⁴⁷ Speyer, *Die literarische Fälschung*, 96 argues that "Fälschungen aus dem Motiv, den anderen zu verfemen oder sich und seiner Gruppe rechtliche, politische oder geldliche Vorteile zu verschaffen, seine wissenschaftliche Eitelkeit zu befriedigen oder andere egoistische Ziele zu erreichen, bereits im Altertum abgelehnt wurden." Cf. K. Aland, 'The Problem of Anonymity and Pseudonymity in Christian Literature of the First Two Centuries', *JTS* NS 12 (1961) 41: "Letters as letters have to introduce their writers. [...] Here the person of the writer was exceedingly important."

⁴⁸ See for these epistles J.M. Lindenberg, *Ancient Aramaic and Hebrew Letters* (ed. K.H. Richards; *Writings from the Ancient World* 4; Atlanta: Scholars, 1994), 56-70.

⁴⁹ Speyer, *Die literarische Fälschung*, 50-6 gives examples of pseudepigraphic authors suggesting they were eyewitnesses of the described events.

⁵⁰ Richard, *Thessalonians*, 394: "3:17 is ponderous in its insistence on authenticity"; Menken, *2 Thessalonians*, 144: "'Paul' imitates, in a way which is [...] somewhat 'overdone', Paul's habit of indicating in words that he now takes the pen in his own hand."

⁵¹ Guthrie, *Introduction*, 680 says: if this is the case "the charge of deliberate deception can scarcely be avoided. Yet such deception is difficult to reconcile with the high spiritual quality of the New Testament writings concerned." It is clear from this last sentence that the presupposed "high spiritual quality" is preventing Guthrie from thinking of deliberate deception. Cf. Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 343 and see W.C. van Manen, *De hoofdbrieven van Paulus*, *De Tijdspiegel* 1889 I, 334 about 2 Thess 3.17 and Gal 6.11.

⁵² G.D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus* (*New International Biblical Commentary* 13; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995) 295 says that this text "puts considerable strain on theories of pseudepigraphy."

Bassler speaks of "one of the most puzzling features of these letters."⁵³ Some authors who defend the pseudepigraphic character of this epistle argue that we may have historical material in this verse.⁵⁴ Others state that the cloak reminds us of Elijah who gives his cloak to Elisha. So Timothy would receive Paul's cloak as a sign of his apostolic authority. According to Meade we find in this verse "a repetition of the theme of 1 Timothy 6:6-10, the kind of lifestyle expected of a Pauline representative. The answer is godliness with *ἀνταρκεία* (1 Tim 6:6)."⁵⁵ This is rather stretched. Is it not much more logical that the pseudepigraphic author with these words tries "to give verisimilitude to his narrative"?⁵⁶ Ehrman argues: "Forgers typically added elements of verisimilitude to their works [...] In a forged epistle, for example, such comments might include off-the-cuff references to an event that the reader could be expected to recognize as having happened to the alleged author."⁵⁷ In my opinion such 'puzzling' texts can be explained if we see that the authors tried to convince the readers of the epistles' authenticity by adding such details.

I conclude that the authors of New Testament pseudepigraphic epistles consciously tried to deceive the readers with regard to the authorship of these epistles. These epistles would not have been accepted in the canon if they had been recognized as forgeries. Some 'puzzling' texts are much more easily explained if we are attentive to the author's intention of convincing the readership of the authenticity.

⁵³ J.M. Bassler, *1 Timothy. 2 Timothy. Titus* (Abingdon New Testament Commentaries; Nashville: Abingdon, 1996) 176.

⁵⁴ See for example Brox, *Pastoralbriefe*, 56.

⁵⁵ Meade, *Pseudonymity*, 138.

⁵⁶ A.T. Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles* (NCBC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans/London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1982) 14 mentions this possibility. Cf. the striking details for example in the third epistle to the Corinthians and in the correspondence between Paul and Seneca.

⁵⁷ Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 343.