

A UNIQUE SOURCE FOR THE STUDY OF ANCIENT PSEUDONYMITY

By ALFRED E. HAEFNER, University of Chicago

Despite the urgent demand, often repeated,¹ for a comprehensive treatment of the subject of ancient pseudonymity, no exhaustive monograph on that subject has yet appeared. Certain phases of the problem, indeed, have received admirable treatment at the hands of Bentley, Roberts, Huit, Susemihl, Blass, Gudeman, and Birt for classical and post-classical pseudonymous literature, while Koestlin, Moffatt, Heinrichi, Juelicher, and Jordan have briefly considered the implications of the subject for New Testament literature.² But inasmuch as these studies do not claim to be exhaustive or definitive, the field of pseudepigraphy is still open for exploration.

The sources available to these scholars are scattered over a wide area, and may be grouped into two classes. First are the

¹ E. g. Susemihl, *Geschichte der griechischen Litteratur in der Alexandrin-erzeit*, Leipzig 1891, Vol. II, p. 580, note 16, where Wilamowitz is quoted to the same effect. Further, W. Wrede in *Z. nt. W.*, Vol. I (1900), p. 78, note 1; E. Hennecke, *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen*, 2d ed., Tuebingen 1924, p. 140; Joseph Schmidt, *Der Epheserbrief des Apostels Paulus*, Freiburg 1928, p. 391, note 2.

² In addition to the references cited by Moffatt (*Introduction*, pp. 40-44), the following might be mentioned: Wm. Roberts, *History of Letter-Writing*, 1843; Ch. Huit, "Les Epistolographes Grecs," in: *Revue des Etudes Grecques*, Vol. II, pp. 149-163; Fr. Blass, "Hermeneutik und Kritik," in: *Hdb. d. kl. Altertumswiss.*, ed. I. v. Mueller, Vol. I, Part 3, 2d ed. 1892, pp. 296 ff.; also the same: "Unechte Briefe," in: *Rhein. Mus.*, Vol. 54 (1899), pp. 33-39; Th. Birt, "Kritik und Hermeneutik," in: *Hdb. d. kl. Altertumswiss.*, Vol. I, Part 3, 3d ed. 1913, pp. 222-242; C. F. G. Heinrichi, *Das Urchristentum in der Geschichte des Eusebius: Litterarische Verhaeltnisse des zweiten Jahrhunderts*, Leipzig 1894; Juelicher, *Introduction*, tr. by J. P. Ward, N. Y. 1904, pp. 51-54.

The writer has also noted, in a publisher's announcement from Bertelsmann, Guetersloh, the following title: Fr. Thorn, *Die Psychologie der Pseudonymität im Urchristentum*; but the brochure (?) was not available. Reference should also be made to von Lehmann, *Pseudo-antike Literatur des Mittelalters*.

incidental remarks of ancient literary critics and historians (along with the scholiasts), who sometimes state their reasons for thinking a given document spurious and occasionally add further elucidating remarks of historical interest. The second group of sources comprises the spurious documents themselves, from which the modern critic can make his inferences about the motives and technique of pseudonymity. Now, the whole point of this curious literary phenomenon lay, of course, in keeping the true authorship *secret*; for one reason or another the pseudonymist wished to hide his identity, whether to gain publicity for his own literary effort, or to promulgate a new doctrine under the authority of a recognized master, or even to perpetuate the master's influence after his death.³ Whatever the explanation, these ends could best be gained, as it was thought, by hiding under the cover of another's name. It would certainly be surprising under these conditions if an author, after publishing his book pseudonymously, would proceed to make an open declaration of his "fraud" and publish his reasons for resorting to such an expedient. He would seem to be thwarting his own purposes.

Yet this is precisely the kind of document we have before us. About the year 440 A.D.⁴ there appeared a pamphlet entitled *Timothei ad Ecclesiam Libri IV* inveighing against the avarice of the times and appealing to the church to renounce its wealth and luxury. The pamphlet begins in the biblical epistolary style: "Timothy, least of the servants of God, to the Church Catholic in all the world, grace to you and peace from God our Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit." The tract was issued under the name of Timothy, with no indications as to its true authorship. When Bishop Salonus got this tract into his hands, he seems quickly to have guessed who wrote it, and

³ Cf. Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.*, iv, 5: "(The Gospel) which was published by Mark may also be maintained to be Peter's, whose interpreter Mark was; for the narrative of Luke also is generally ascribed to Paul; since it is allowable that that which pupils publish should be regarded as their master's work."

⁴ For the date of Salvian's literary activity see especially Salvian: *On the Government of God*, transl. by Eva M. Sanford, Columbia University Press 1930.

forthwith sent a letter of protest to Salvian, presbyter of Marseille. Salonius feared that the work might be mistaken for an apocryphal work of the Apostle Timothy, and demanded reasons for publishing the book pseudonymously. Thereupon Salvian wrote an answer to Bishop Salonius—the ninth of his preserved letters—in which, always speaking of the author in the third person, he set forth his reasons for adopting the pseudonym and thereby strikingly exemplified the contemporary attitude toward the practice.

This letter of Salvian's thus seems to be a unique document. The very man who has published a pseudonymous book is divulging his reasons for doing so. It is as though we had caught the "criminal" in the act. As a source for the study of ancient pseudonymity there is nothing to compare with this letter; yet Moffatt is the only modern critic to give it a passing reference.⁸ The letter itself has been edited and reedited in Salvian's collected works,⁹ and its biographical or psychological interest for the study of Salvian has certainly not escaped the attention of critics. But it can scarcely be said that the letter has been properly evaluated as a source for ancient pseudonymity; and to the best of my knowledge it has never been translated into English. Accordingly, a tentative translation is herewith offered to show something of the interest and uniqueness that attaches to this letter.

Even so, I do not mean to exaggerate the importance of Salvian's letter. For on the one hand, Salvian gives us little information about pseudonymity beyond what could be inferred from our previous sources; and on the other hand the letter is too late (ca. 440 A.D.) to permit of definite and unqualified conclusions with respect to the practice of pseudonymity in New Testament times. Nevertheless, the letter has an interest all its own. For in the first place, it seems to be the only document in which the pseudonymist is speaking in his own defense (as it were), and it may fairly be called unique in this sense. In the

⁸ Moffatt, *Introduction*, p. 41, note.

⁹ For the editions and bibliography see Eva M. Sanford, *op. cit.*

second place, it has unusual interest for the history of literature, for the observing student will see in Salvian's comments a certain change of purpose in the use of pseudonymity. With Salvian we have passed from the age of pseudepigraphy to the age of pseudonymity (in the narrower and more modern sense). Finally, the document is one of two or three which may aid us in forming a judgment on the difficult question of the ethics of pseudonymity in ancient times. In this respect it takes its place side by side with the passing notice of Tertullian⁷ and with that illuminating treatise of Galen, "Concerning my books," to which Heinrici has called attention.⁸

It is hoped that the appended translation of Salvian's ninth letter will hasten the day when the much-desired study of *Pseudonymity in Ancient Times* will make its long-delayed appearance.

SALVIAN'S NINTH LETTER⁹

To his master, his most blessed student, father, and son—student by circumstance, son by affection, and father in esteem—to Bishop Salonius Sakerian sends greetings!

You have inquired of me, my beloved Salonius, why the pamphlet which someone of our own day has written to the church was published under the name of Timothy. And further you add that unless I explain the reason for this name and why the book was ascribed to Timothy, it will probably have to be classed among the Apocrypha. I am sincerely grateful and duly acknowledge the fact that you think so highly of me as to regard it

⁷ Tertullian, de baptismo, ch. 17: "But if the writings (i.e., Acts of Paul and Thekla) which wrongly go under Paul's name, claim Thekla's example as a license for women's teaching and baptizing, let them (i.e., the women claiming this license) know that, in Asia, the presbyter who composed that writing, as if he were augmenting Paul's fame from his own store, after being convicted, and confessing that he had done it from love of Paul, was removed from his office." Cf. also Carl Schmidt, *Acta Pauli*, Leipzig 1905, pp. 173 ff.

⁸ Heinrici, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-78.

⁹ The translation is from Pauly's edition of Salvian's works in the *Vienna Corpus Script. Eccl. Lat.*, Vol. VIII, 1883. Miss Sanford kindly read the manuscript and made suggestions which have been incorporated into the present text.

a matter of importance to my reputation not to let any ecclesiastical work rest on insecure foundations,¹⁰ on the ground that a work of the greatest merit may be less highly valued if people are in doubt about its authorship. The mere fact already indicated above, namely that this book treats a modern subject and was written by a contemporary out of zeal and love for God's cause, is itself enough to preclude completely the suspicion of its apocryphal character; for the document will not be suspected as apocryphal when it is recognized that it is not by the Apostle Timothy.¹¹

But someone perhaps will ask who the author is if not the Apostle, and whether the author has used his own or a fictitious name in the pamphlet concerned. Quite right; such questions may fairly be asked. And rightly so, if the investigation of authorship can arrive at any positive result. On the other hand, if the investigation is of no avail, why should it be necessary for curiosity to exert itself, since the results of such an investigation will not contribute to a better understanding of the book? For in the case of every book we ought to be more concerned about the intrinsic value of its contents than about the name of its author. And therefore, if the book is profitable reading and offers something to edify the reader, what does it matter whether or not it happens to satisfy someone's curiosity about the name of the author?¹² We might well quote the angel's answer to his inquisitive companion: "Seekest thou a tribe and a family, or a hired man?"¹³ Since the name is immaterial, there is no use in asking

¹⁰ Cf. Cyprian, Ep., ix, 2. Cyprian had received a letter of official church business which was so mutilated upon delivery that he at once sent it back for verification. "For," he says, "it is a very serious thing if the truth of a clerical letter is corrupted by any falsehood (*mendacio*) or deceit (*fraude*). In order then that we may know this, ascertain whether the writing and subscription are yours, and write me again what is the truth of the matter" (transl. by R. E. Wallis).

¹¹ This statement shows that the title "Timothei ad Ecclesiam Libri IV" was not designed to deceive the public outright. The statement is interesting as indicating a change from pseudepigraphy to pseudonymity.

¹² This is probably what Moffatt means when he speaks of Salvian's "'pseudonymous' principle" (*Introduction*, p. 41, note).

¹³ Tobit, v. 11. A curious touch of humor. Tobit's inquisitiveness forced the angel Raphael into a mild form of simulation; hence the appropriateness of the reference.

about the author's name so long as the reader profits from the book itself. This really settles the case, as my arguments show.

But you, my Saloni¹⁴, are our pride and our patron, and we would withhold nothing from you. We shall give more explicit reasons. There are three questions that can be asked about the pamphlet under discussion. First, why does the author address himself to the church at large? Second, is he employing a fictitious name or his own? If not his own, why does he resort to a pseudonym? And third, if he is using a pseudonym, why has he chosen the name of Timothy rather than any other? . . .

We come to the second question,¹⁴ namely, Why does the author not use his own name in the title of the book? Although there is only one main reason, I think several reasons could be adduced. The first is this, based upon a divine command, that we are urged to avoid every pretense of earthly vainglory, for fear that while we are covetous of the mere bauble of man's praise we should lose our heavenly reward. It follows that when God bids us pray and give our alms in secret, he wants us also to bestow the fruits of our labors in secret; for our faith could not show itself more genuine than by avoiding the approbation of men and relying solely upon the approval of God. For our Saviour says, "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth . . . and thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee."¹⁵ And therefore this reason alone ought to suffice as an explanation for the author's concealing his name and keeping it out of the title of his book, since he thought that what he had done for the honor of his Lord should be known only to God himself, and that the work might please God the more as it ignored public recognition.

Nevertheless, it must be confessed that the main reason lies in the fact that the writer, in his own words, is humble in his own sight, self-effacing, thinking only of his own utter insignificance; and, what is more, he is this by pure faith, not by virtue of any

¹⁴ The lengthy answer to the first question is here omitted as irrelevant.

¹⁵ Matth. vi, 3. As a motive for even Salvian's pseudonymous activity, this statement must be taken with more than a grain of salt.

false humility but simply as a matter of plain fact. Therefore, since he thought—and rightly so—that others ought to regard him in the same way that he regarded himself, the author wisely selected a pseudonym¹⁶ for his book for the obvious reason that he did not wish the obscurity of his own person to detract from the influence of his otherwise valuable book. For a statement is commonly taken to be worth what its author is worth. For people nowadays are so trivial and worthless that when they read, they are more concerned about the author than about what they are reading; they are more interested in the author's reputation than in the force and vigor of his words.¹⁷ For this reason the present writer chose to conceal his identity in every respect for fear that his true name would perhaps detract from the influence of his book, which really contains much that is exceedingly valuable. That is the reason—whoever wants to know it—why the pamphlet was published pseudonymously.

It remains to explain why, in particular, the name of Timothy was chosen. This takes us back to the author again. The primary reason is this. Just as humility had prompted him to choose a pseudonym in the first place, so it was reverence and discretion that moved him to use the name of Timothy. The author is naturally timid and conscientious, careful to avoid even the slightest deception, and so much afraid of doing wrong that he sometimes fears things that need not be feared at all. When, therefore, he chose to remove his name from the title and replace it with a pseudonym, he was actually afraid of the charge of deliberate fraud on account of this change of names, for he was con-

¹⁶ In the annotated edition of Rittershausen (1688) the editor comments as follows: "When publishing a book, anyone is permitted to conceal his true name, or to use another man's name or pseudonym, provided only that the book contains nothing that is detrimental to good morals. . . . Nor is such a change of names in any way considered as criminal forgery. Hence Cujacius (ad tit. C. de Mutat. nomin.) says: 'If no fraud is intended, everyone has the privilege of assuming a fictitious name as he may see fit; nor can action be brought against anyone for the mere fact that he has assumed a different name; but this principle holds only so long as no fraudulent purposes are involved.'"

¹⁷ Rittershausen (*op. cit.*) supports this statement by reference to Ecclesiasticus xiii, 21-23, and Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights*, xi, 4, where Euripides (Hecuba, 293) and Ennius are quoted (see Loeb translation).

scious of the fact that the reproach of falsification should be avoided even when discharging a sacred duty. While he was thus wavering between two opinions, he thought it best to follow the holy example of the blessed Evangelist who, while he seemed to have written for some individual when he inscribed the name of Theophilus in the preface of both his sacred volumes, yet in reality wrote for the "love of God"; that is, he thought it very appropriate to dedicate his books to that same "love of God" which had prompted him to write what he did in the first place. The present author followed the same argument with the same intentions. For he was well aware that every word in his pamphlet was written for the "honor of God," just as the Evangelist's words were written for the "love of God"; and for the same reason that the latter chose the name Theophilus, the present writer chose "Timothy." For the name Theophilus means "love of God," and the name Timothy means "honor of God."¹⁸ Hence, when you read that "Timothy" has written to the church, you should understand that the book was written to the church "for the honor of God," or rather that the honor of God itself has sent this pamphlet out; for He who caused the book to be written is rightly called its Author. For this reason, then, the name of Timothy appears in the title of the book. Indeed, the author thought it fitting that since his book was written for the honor of God he should dedicate the title to the "honor of God" itself.

There you have what you asked for, my beloved Saloni-
us. I have performed the task imposed upon me. And now that I have done my duty, you have yet to do yours; that is, you must implore our Lord God and by your prayer bring it to pass that the book addressed "To the Church" in honor of Christ may bring as much profit to the author from God as he hopes the readers have gained from it. Surely it is a pardonable desire if a man asks as much aid toward his own salvation as he, prompted by love, desires for others.

Goodbye, Saloni-
us, our pride and our patron!

¹⁸ Another indication of the change from pseudepigraphy in the ancient sense to pseudonymity in the modern sense.