

Hermann Josef Riedl. *Anamnese und Apostolizität: Der Zweite Petrusbrief und das theologische Problem neutestamentlicher Pseudepigraphie*. Regensburger Studien zur Theologie 64. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2005. Pp. xiv + 297. ISBN: 978-3-631-54557-7. €51.10, \$79.95 USD, cloth.

1. The book to be reviewed here is a slightly revised version of a habilitation thesis at the Catholic theological faculty of the University of Regensburg. The author is both an academic theologian and a Catholic priest, and it is evident that his choice of subject to be dealt with is relevant both in the academy and in the church. It is an in-depth discussion of pseudepigraphy in general and especially pseudepigraphy in the New Testament.

2. Many Christians have found it disturbing that a number of Biblical texts are said not to be written by the persons who are given as authors by the texts themselves. In some cases the problem may not be so troublesome; 1 Peter states itself that it is written down by Silvanus, not Peter in person. But, and here the problem arrives, the differences between, for instance, 1 Peter and 2 Peter are not only of a stylistic character, something which could be explained by the use of different secretaries. They are much deeper; the two texts clearly belong to different theological and cultural worlds. And there are very good reasons to believe that 2 Peter was written well after the death of the great apostle whose name it carries. Among critical scholars of today there is more or less a consensus that 2 Peter is a pseudepigraphical text, written by someone other than Peter. That the Bible is wrong is the immediate conclusion drawn by many. If we cannot trust that Peter really has written “his” letters, can we trust what else is written in the Bible?

3. Riedl has taken as his task to show that biblical pseudepigraphy can be explained positively as a way to remember and make present the apostle and his message; it does not mean that the apostle (or someone close to him) has written the text himself, but it is an honest and correct way to make his message a present reality in the life of the readers, a generation or two later.

4. The book has three main parts. In the first chapter, making up pages 13-75, the author gives a thorough discussion on the question of the authenticity of 2 Peter, and the reader can arrive at a clear understanding of why so many scholars have concluded that the text is not Petrine in the modern sense of that word. The great apostle is not the author: both the relationship to the letter of Jude and a number of anachronisms more or less rule out that possibility. Riedl ends this chapter with a discussion on the ethics of pseudepigraphy. Can it be reconciled with canonicity, inspiration and infallibility? He concludes that the text is so openly pseudepigraphical that no contemporary reader reasonably could imagine that Peter was the real author. Thus pseudepigraphy was no problem. It is only when we read it with modern glasses and against the background of modern ideas of copyright that it becomes a problem.

5. The second chapter, pages 77-142, introduces a number of biblical scholars (K. Aland, Speyer, Brox, Zmijewski, Pokorný, Meade, Roloff, Baum and Theißen) and their attempts to come to grips with the fact of New Testament pseudepigraphy. The solutions proposed vary widely: the Holy Spirit is free to use a pseudepigraphical author as spokesman, the epistle is a forgery and must be judged as such, or the biblical canon is the result of *sola gratia* and not the outcome of normal human work, etc. In this chapter the author mainly summarizes what various scholars have stated, and there is no reason to doubt the correctness of these summaries.

6. In the third chapter, pages 143-230, Riedl, not being satisfied with what was concluded by the scholars mentioned, presents his own solution to the problem of pseudepigraphy within the biblical canon. His contribution centres on the concept of remembrance, certainly a most central idea in 2 Peter, e.g., in 2 Pet 1:12-15: “Therefore I intend to keep on reminding (*hypomimnēskēin*) you of these things ... to refresh your memory (*hypomnēsis*) ... that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall (*mnēmēn poieisthai*) these things” and 3:1-4: “by reminding you ... that you should remember the words ...” (*diegeirō hymōn en hypomnēsei ... mnēsthēnai tōn proeirēmatōn rēmatōn ...*). Riedl states that the idea of remembrance has been overlooked in modern scholarship and now needs to be brought forward as a central interpretative key for pseudepigraphy. He supports this idea by a careful analysis of the use of similar expressions in the Old Testament leading up to the Eucharistic words with the exhortation “Do this in remembrance (*anamnēsis*) of me” (Luke 22:19). The Greek word *anamnēsis* does not necessarily have a deeper meaning, but Riedl points out its biblical background in the Hebrew stem *zkr* and the abstract noun *zikkaron*. The idea behind expressions like these is that the participant in the cult himself/herself gets directly involved in the acts of salvation, be it Jesus’ death for his disciples or something else. As Riedl understands 2 Peter and other comparable texts, their purpose is to involve the readers (or rather those who listened to the texts being read aloud; most people were illiterate) directly in the life of, in this case, Peter, to make them present “on the holy mountain” (2 Pet 1:18) and thus make the Transfiguration such a striking reality for them that they rightly could conclude that the eschatological message that went all the way back to Peter and ultimately to the Lord himself is trustworthy. By this act of remembrance the heretics (2 Pet 3:3-4) should be proven wrong.

7. The author summarizes his thesis in the following words: “... dass sich in der Erinnerung eine Vergegenwärtigung der Objekte des Gedenkens ereignet und die Sich-Erinnernden mit den Objekten des Gedenkens gleichzeitig werden ... Der 2. Petrusbrief kann deshalb zu Recht als apostolisch bezeichnet werden. Die Anamnese ermöglicht die Apostolizität des Briefes.”

8. The bibliography makes up 40 pages. It is evident that the author has studied his topic in depth and that his readers can be grateful for all the work he has devoted to this often discussed problem. The issue is an important one, involving both biblical scholars and Christian readers, many of whom have difficulties reconciling pseudepigraphy with canonicity and divine inspiration. I believe that the author’s idea, based as it is on the Hebrew concept of *zkr*, is fruitful and worthy of further studies. Still I doubt that those who find the existence of pseudepigraphical texts in the New Testament problematic from a religious point of view will be convinced by Riedl’s analysis. It is still not true in the modern individualistic sense of the word that the author of 2 Peter, whoever he was, was present on the holy mountain as he states that he was. I have, however, found it most inspiring to read this book, and I hope that it will find many grateful readers. The author is to be congratulated.

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