

University of Toronto DSR – Statement of Proposed Study

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Proposed Project Title:

“Paul as Author: Pauline Pseudepigraphy, Author Criticism, and the Epistolary Genre”

Contours of the Study:

The purpose of this proposed study is to further contemporary discussions of Author criticism, the Apostle Paul, and Pauline pseudepigraphy. How can we understand Paul as an Author of letters, especially as this pertains to pseudepigraphal Pauline letters? The question of authorship of letters attributed to Paul remains a topic of interest for scholars of early Christianity, reflected in several recent monographs and collected volumes (e.g., B.D. Ehrman, A.D. Baum, T.L. Wilder, A. Merz, S.E. Porter, J. Frey et al., S.E. Porter and G.P. Fewster). Typical approaches to this issue include: situating early Christian pseudepigraphy within the tradition of early Jewish pseudepigraphal apocalypses (e.g., J.D. Miller, N. Brox, Baum, H.J. Reidl), comparisons of style and theology between “Pauline” letters (e.g., P.N. Harrison, Ehrman), questioning the ethics within pseudepigraphy itself (e.g., L.W. Donelson, J.W. Marshall), and as a result, canonical validity and status (e.g., D.G. Meade, Porter, R.W. Wall, B.M. Metzger). These are not mutually exclusive lines of inquiry and have often been combined in studies of early Christian pseudepigraphy in general, individual letters (e.g., Colossians, 2 Thessalonians), or groups of letters (e.g., the Pastorals). In spite of some provocative developments in the field, there continues to be a need for the reassessment of Pauline pseudepigraphy in particular. The present state of discussion is unfortunately limited in many quarters by outdated and unrefined methods (see esp. Ehrman and R.I. Pervo). There is thus ample opportunity for new and provocative theoretical innovation to push understandings of Authorship and pseudepigraphy forward. At the same time, scholars have preferred such nondescript labels as “deutero-Pauline,” perhaps as a means of sanitizing potential theologically destructive implications of “false” authorship. A fixation on pseudepigraphy as literary deception (or not) is a derivative of such theologically motivated positioning. These tendencies divert attention from developing a clearer understanding of the practice and function of Authorship and pseudepigraphy in the ancient world, against which Pauline and pseudo-Pauline letter writing can be situated. A study that seeks to overcome these and similar shortcomings would fill a niche in the contemporary study of religion.

To that end, my study will seek to press the discussion in three significant ways.

(1) Limit the investigation of primary texts to those early Christian documents attributed (correctly or incorrectly) to St Paul. Canonical letters would be included along with other Pauline pseudepigrapha such as *3 Corinthians*, *Letter to the Laodiceans*, and the Paul-Seneca correspondence. Canonical status is a somewhat artificial boundary if *Pauline* pseudepigraphy is in question, although that boundary is often respected (e.g., R.F. Collins). On the other hand, the important and distinctive features of Pauline pseudepigraphy can be blurred in more general analyses of early Christian pseudepigraphy. To my knowledge, there are only a few studies that limit their scope to the Pauline and pseudo-Pauline letters without accommodating restrictions provided by the Protestant canon. These include the very brief and cursory treatment by M. Harding and the recent volume edited by S.E. Porter and myself, which encourages this line of thought. Such a delimitation of primary texts leaves potential for some novel insights for Pauline Authorship not otherwise noted in previous studies.

(2) Utilize insights from contemporary Authorship theory, particularly the authorial signature. Authorship theory has developed from post-structural semiotics, owing some of its primary insights—the destruction of the hegemonic pairing of Author and Critic in textual interpretation—to Barthes’ “The Death of the Author,” and Foucault’s “What is an Author?” The notion of Authorship has been pursued further with Derrida’s “authorial signature” as laid out in his “Signature Event Context” and more fully in *Glas*. Derrida’s author signature promotes the signature as a signifier of simultaneous presence and absence (contra J.L. Austen). Signature opens the door for pseudonymous use in a way that an unsigned work does not. The authorial signature has been utilized and developed in the work of P. Kamuf (*Signature Pieces*) and most recently several works by critic S. Burke (*The Death and Return of the Author*, *The Ethics of Writing*, and “The Ethics of Signature”), among other critical works. Where Pauline scholars frequently press a strict divide between authentic and inauthentic Authorship, contemporary Authorship theories help to re-envision traditional categories (such as deutero and deception). Authorship involves authentic and pseudonymous writing as part of larger authorial construct. These theories also provide alternative avenues of inquiry into ancient authorial practice and conventions. Such insights have only briefly been applied to the question of authorship in early Christianity in J. Wyrick’s *The Ascension of Authorship* and more recently in my own “Hermeneutical Issues in Canonical Pseudepigrapha.” A full blown treatment of Authorship and ancient pseudepigraphy is warranted.

(3) Take seriously the letter genre of Pauline writings for influencing the manifestation and function of pseudepigraphy itself. While pseudepigraphy transcends numerous literary genres, arguably it has differing functions and effects depending on specific genres. The suggestion to fully appreciate Pauline pseudepigraphy as letters surprisingly has not been widespread, with articles by R. Bauckham and J.W. Marshall being the most significant here. The epistolary genre and its accompanying material environment poses many complexities to the way we currently conceive of pseudepigraphy. Letter production frequently involved a secretary, who, as E.R. Richards and others have demonstrated, could lend varying levels of compositional influence. Further, letter production (and other types of documents for that matter) may have been a more communal exercise than modern authorship paradigms often appreciate. The practices and forms of ancient epistolography provide significant constraints upon the way we should think of Paul as an author and, as a result, pseudepigraphy.

The resulting study will be one with a clearly delineated set of primary texts and a robust methodology. Contemporary Authorship theory and ancient epistolography interface in a way that has potential to articulate new and informative ways of thinking about Pauline Authorship and pseudepigraphy. For example, critical theorizing about the authorial signature can be situated within the material context of letter writing, which reflect a constitutive structure and well-defined “signing” practices. This project represents a productive cross-disciplinary endeavour, involving the intersection of contemporary critical theory and ancient material culture in the study of early Christianity.

Qualifications for the Study:

My graduate training and publishing record up to this point puts me in an optimal place to pursue the project delineated above. My undergraduate studies exposed me to the general critical study of the Bible—especially the New Testament—while my Masters degree provided more directed study in the Pauline corpus. More specifically, my graduate studies focused especially on Greek language and linguistics, from which I have gained expertise in linguistic theory and semiotics

(including postmodern developments therein) as well as competency in Hellenistic Greek. A graduate course in papyrology has also exposed me to the language of the papyri as well as methodological issues in the study of ancient material culture. Several publications demonstrate my competency and creative thinking in the areas of Pauline studies, linguistics/semiotics, and Pauline pseudepigraphy. These can be viewed in my CV.

My language qualifications included three years of formal undergraduate training in New Testament Greek and three years of graduate work in Greek language and linguistics. In addition to New Testament Greek I have worked in Septuagintal Greek, Classical and Hellenistic Greek and the Greek of the papyri. I am familiar with majuscule hands (documentary and literary) and later miniscule hands as well. These skills provide a solid base for researching ancient Greek letters. In addition to Greek, I have an elementary reading knowledge of biblical Hebrew, recently received an A- in a German reading course at McMaster University for religious studies students, and took six years of elementary French. I am currently working on developing my French further. A reading knowledge of Latin may also be an important supplementary language for my proposed study.

Studying at the DSR:

The Department for the Study of Religion at the University of Toronto is an ideal location to pursue this proposed study. Furthermore, the size and quality of the University at large, will provide access to numerous valuable resources, including the Thomas Fischer Rare Book library and other faculties for cross-disciplinary support. Several core and cross-listed faculty will be excellent supervisors for my project. John Kloppenborg has expertise in ancient material culture and papyrology, with well developed skills in applying such insights to the historical and social contexts of early Christianity. He has also supervised several dissertations in the area of Pauline studies. John Marshall teaches and has published in the area of ancient Jewish and Christian pseudepigraphy, which would greatly benefit the specific issues related to Pauline pseudepigraphy in context. Bradley McLean has written on philosophical hermeneutics and semiotics and has paid brief attention to Authorship theory in biblical studies and Pauline pseudepigraphy. His expertise would aid in the development of a robust methodology for my project. In addition to these faculty members, the collaborative program in Book History & Print Culture would be an excellent locale to further nuance my project in terms of methodological refinement for both ancient and contemporary theoretical concerns.

I look forward to the opportunity to study at the University of Toronto and am grateful for the opportunity to submit an application.