

Here is the third (and last) post on the use of secretaries in the ancient world, in which I discuss the issue of whether illiterate people (like Simon Peter, or John the son of Zebedee) could have had someone else write their books for them - so that 1 Peter \*could\* in some sense actually be by Peter if he couldn't write, or the Revelation of John be by John. These three posts are all blasts from the past, reruns from exactly four years ago on the blog. Here is what I said back then about secretaries.

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THIS IS A CONTINUATION OF MY PREVIOUS POST ON SECRETARIES IN THE ANCIENT WORLD, DRAWN FROM MY FORTHCOMING BOOK FORGERY AND COUNTERFORGERY. IN THE EARLIER POST I TALKED ABOUT THE USE OF SECRETARIES IN TAKING DICTATION AND DOING LIGHT COPY-EDITING, BASED ON THE FINDINGS OF THE FULL STUDY OF RANDALL RICHARDS. THE DISCUSSION IS RELEVANT TO THE WRITINGS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT: COULD 1 PETER, OR EPHESIANS, OR ANY OF THE OTHER PSEUDEPIGRAPHICAL WRITINGS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT HAVE BEEN PRODUCED BY SECRETARIES RATHER THAN THEIR REPUTED AUTHORS?

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It is Richards' third and fourth categories that are particularly germane to the questions of early Christian forgery. What is the evidence that secretaries were widely used, or used at all, as co-authors of letters or as Ersatz composers? If there is any evidence that secretaries sometimes joined an author in creating a letter, Richards has failed to find or produce it. The one example he considers involves the relationship of Cicero and Tiro, cited earlier by Gordon Bahr as evidence for co-authorship. In Bahr's words „Tiro took part in the composition of the letter.“ But Richards points out that Bahr cites no evidence to support this claim, opting instead simply to assert the conclusion. Moreover, there is nothing stylistically in the Ciceronian correspondence to suggest a co-authorship. Richards concludes that at most Tiro sometimes engaged in „minor corrective editing.“ What is most odd in Richards' discussion, however, is the conclusion that he draws, once he discounts the evidence of Cicero, the one and only piece of evidence he considers: „Evidently then, ... secretaries were used as co-authors.“ It is not at all clear what makes this view „evident,“ given the circumstance that he has not cited a solitary piece of evidence for it.

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