

Here is the second of a series of three blasts from the past — from four years ago when I was dealing with how secretaries were and, especially, were not used in the ancient world by authors when producing their work. Did authors (such as John for the book of Revelation, or Peter for either 1 or 2 Peter) use a secretary to write their books for them? To answer the question with something other than common sense (that is, common guessing), we need to know about secretarial practices in antiquity. As it turns out, we do know some things, as I'll explain in this post and the next.

This is what I said four years ago now:

I have received some comments and emails about my claims about Silvanus as a secretary (or rather, NOT as a secretary) for the book of 1 Peter, and realized it would help if I could give some more detail about what we know about secretaries in the ancient world. The following is from an excursus in my forthcoming Forgery and Counterforgery; it will come in two parts, the first today and the second, hopefully, tomorrow. If you've read my book Forged, the substance of what follows will be familiar; this is the slightly more whomped up version of what I discuss there.

Now that we have explored six of the Deutero-Pauline epistles, we are in a position to consider the hypothesis widely invoked by advocates of authenticity to explain how a letter allegedly by an author should differ so radically from other writings he produced. The notion that early Christian authors used secretaries who altered the writing style and contributed to the contents of a writing— thereby creating the anomalies that arouse the critics' suspicion — is so widespread as to be virtually ubiquitous. There is no need here to cite references; one need only consult the commentaries, not only on the Pauline corpus but on 1 and 2 Peter as well. At the same time, almost no one who invokes the secretary hypothesis sees any reason to adduce any evidence for it. Instead, it is simply widely assumed that since authors used secretaries — as Paul, at least, certainly did (Rom. 16:22; Cor. 16:21; Gal. 6:11) — these otherwise unknown persons contributed not only to the style of a writing but also to its contents. There is a good reason that commentators who propose the hypothesis so rarely cite any evidence to support it. The ancient evidence is very thin, to the point of being non-existent.

FOR THE REST OF THIS POST, log in as a member. If you don't yet belong, JOIN ALREADY!!!

You need to be logged in to see this part of the content. Please [Login](#) to access.



[Does a Person Need the Holy Spirit to Interpret the Bible? Is John's Gospel Accurate? Readers Mailbag August 7, 2016](#)
[Who Could Read and Write? A Blast from the Past.](#)