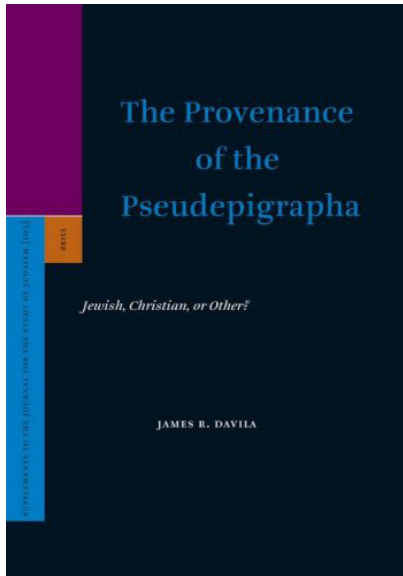


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**Davila, James R.**

***The Provenance of the Pseudepigrapha: Jewish, Christian, or Other?***

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James Davila has published extensively on the Dead Sea Scrolls. The current monograph concerns the pseudepigrapha, and its telling title addresses the provenance of these writings. The book deals with methodological issues and consists of five chapters and an exhaustive bibliography. Davila demonstrates that he deems the pseudepigrapha as subjects worthy of study in their own right and not just as a means to understand the New Testament or rabbinic literature better (3).

#### 1. Establishing the Origins of Old Testament Pseudepigrapha

It is Davila's intention to formulate general methodological rules in order to understand pseudepigraphical writings. In the process, he rejects various "distortions." One is "that pseudepigrapha that lack explicitly Christian content or elements, or whose explicitly Christian elements can be easily excised on redaction-critical grounds, were originally Jewish compositions" (3). It is evident that Davila is apprehensive about historical-critical methods and that he deems the receptor audience important. Following Robert Kraft, he argues that the point of departure of any reflection on pseudepigrapha should be the manuscripts in which they survived (5). Therefore, instead of too readily accepting that any given text was originally a Jewish pseudepigraphon, the process should be reversed

and, from its practical application, it should be deemed a Christian writing unless otherwise demonstrated (5).

Davila's thesis is clear yet somewhat complicated. He accepts that mathematical proof is not possible in the humanities, but for the sake of objectivity his declared aim is to "*accept particular works as Jewish only when this is established beyond reasonable doubt on the basis of positive evidence*" (8). In order to realize this aim, he formulated applicable internal ("signature features") and external criteria.

## 2. Jewish Pseudepigrapha and Christian Apocrypha: (How) Can We Tell Them Apart?

This chapter is aimed at developing applicable methodological principles. Hence suitable criteria play an important role in Davila's reflection. The term "Jews" is used to indicate Judeans from the fourth century B.C.E. through to Tannaitic times, the third century C.E. The following external criteria are developed to establish a workable corpus of Jewish literature: (1) if a work with clear Jewish themes and content survives in manuscripts copied in the pre-Christian era; (2) if a work survives from the pre-Christian era in Hebrew. Based on these criteria, he deems five groups of texts to be Jewish: (1) the Dead Sea Scrolls from Wadi Qumran; (2) texts from Masada; (3) texts from the Bar Kokhba era; (4) texts in fragmentary format among the Judean desert corpus that appear fully in later translations, and (5) Tannaitic rabbinic literature. He suggests another working hypothesis, namely, that works by Jewish authors (Philo and Josephus) that have dates and that are quoted by later Christian authors should in fact be accepted as Jewish.

A paragraph is devoted to definitions of Judaism. The author is skeptical of various attempts to understand Judaism. These include "monothetic" attempts (Sanders and Dunn), as well as Neusner's, to account for the variations in Judaism. Davila finds J. Z. Smith's "polythetic" approach to define a broad group of characteristics attractive. In his opinion, the following shared traits should be taken into account (20): (1) worship of the God of Israel alone; (2) the acceptance of certain books as Jewish scriptures given as revelation by this God; (3) the acceptance of a historical narrative drawn from those scriptures; (4) the following of customs, laws, and rituals mandated in those scriptures; (5) participation in or support of the temple cult in Jerusalem; (6) self-identification as a Jew; (7) membership of, and acceptance by, a particular Jewish community; and (8) acceptance of Palestine as the Holy Land.

The rest of the chapter is devoted to definitions of existing groupings in early Judaism/the intertestamental era. The ways in which Jews interacted with non-Christian Gentiles are addressed. Four categories are proposed: proselytes; God-fearers; sympathizers, and syncretistic Jews. From these reflections (35–37) it is clear how problematic it is to

distinguish between these categories. The defining of other groupings, such as Christians and non-Christian Gentiles, proves just as difficult. In order to address the differences between Jews and Christians, Davila offers definitions of Jewish-Christianity and Judaizing Gentile Christianity. Moreover, to distinguish between these groups, he borrows a term from Kimelman, namely, “boundary maintenance” (48).

Davila subsequently discusses all the possibilities concerning the social and intercultural relations between Jews, Gentiles, and Christians in early Judaism. In the process, he proposes a total of eleven scenarios. Davila condenses these and then proposes five principles that can be utilized as working hypotheses in order to analyze the Old Testament pseudepigrapha (68): (1) pseudepigrapha with extensive or pervasive positive Jewish signature features and no Christian features provide the best case for attribution of compositions written by boundary-maintaining Jews; (2) pseudepigrapha with extensive or pervasive positive Samaritan signature features may reasonably be deemed Samaritan compositions; (3) texts with polytheistic elements were not produced by boundary-maintaining Jews or Christians; (4) texts with signature features of both Judaism and Christianity may be regarded as belonging to a variety of categories; and (5) all other pseudepigrapha should be understood in the context of the earliest preserved manuscript or earliest quotation of the work in question.

### 3. Did Christians Write Old Testament Pseudepigrapha That Appear to Be Jewish?

One of the issues at stake is whether Christian authors would consistently have included Christian signature features in Old Testament pseudepigrapha. Again Davila takes a cue from Kraft’s work, this time his suggestion that Christian sermons provide information about the use of the Old Testament. Using Tigay’s collection *Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism*, Davila aims to demonstrate the real danger of Christian works being mistaken for Jewish ones (76). He answers various questions in this regard. First, Christians indeed wrote Old Testament pseudepigrapha. Second, ancient Christians in fact attributed Old Testament pseudepigrapha to Christians even when they lacked any Christian signature features. Third, Christians interpolated Christian material in order to make it sound more Christian, for example, 3 Baruch. Finally, a twofold question is posed: whether Christians wrote Old Testament pseudepigrapha with Christian signature features that could be mistaken for secondary redactions, and whether Christians produced Old Testament pseudepigrapha without including any Christian signature features at all.

Davila chooses a representative collection of relevant Christian works in order to prove his point. These include two homilies by John Chrysostom; a sermon by Augustine on Mic 6:6–8 and Ps 72; Ephrem the Syrian’s commentaries on Genesis and Exodus; the *Heptateuchos* of Pseudo-Cyprianus; and *De Martyrio Maccabaeorum*.

The conclusion of this chapter is that ancient Christians in fact wrote Old Testament pseudepigrapha without alluding explicitly to Christianity. As a matter of fact, Eusebius of Caesarea actually attributed a work with no Christian features (*De Monarchia*) to a Christian (115).

#### 4. Jewish Pseudepigrapha

Finally, the theoretical reflections of the previous chapters are applied by the author. It is the aim of this chapter “to establish a corpus of pseudepigrapha that can be assigned Jewish authorship beyond reasonable doubt” (120). Here internal considerations are primary to Davila, since most of the examples he discusses were transmitted in Christian circles. The first example is the book of Aristeas. He presents a relatively exhaustive discussion, although I do miss the work by S. Honigman, *The Septuagint and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria* (London: Routledge, 2003). I do, nevertheless, agree with Davila that this treatise was written by a Torah-observant, boundary-maintaining Jew (see my “Reconsidering Septuagintal Origins” in *JSem* 14 [2005]: 441–61); paragraphs 139 (“he fenced us about with impregnable palisades and with walls of iron”) and 143 (“he hedged us around on all sides by rules of purity”) are evidence in this regard.

The other examples are also appropriately argued by Davila. These include 2 Baruch, the Similitudes of Enoch, 4 Ezra, 3 and 4 Maccabees, the Testament/Assumption of Moses, Pseudo-Philo’s Biblical Antiquities, and the Psalms of Solomon.

#### 5. Some Pseudepigrapha of Debatable Origin

In this chapter the author presents six works that he deems of uncertain provenance, even though they were included in James Charlesworth’s *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. Davila concludes that Sibylline Oracles book 3 was written either by a Hellenized Jew or by a Gentile who was fundamentally influenced by Judaism in the second or first centuries B.C.E. He also argues that three interpretations (see J. J. Collins) are possible for the fifth book of the Sibylline oracles. In his opinion, it is not possible with the available evidence to prefer any of these options. Six more writings are deemed of uncertain provenance: Joseph and Aseneth; the Testaments of Job and Abraham; the Story of Zosimus; the Abode of the Blessed; and The History of the Rechabites.

In an excursus on the Old Testament Apocrypha, the problematic yet enlightening nature of Davila’s method becomes evident. The Wisdom of Solomon, which is generally deemed to be a Jewish writing, is analyzed in the light of his formulated criteria, and on the basis of external as well as internal considerations Davila argues that this writing

could just as well have been written by a Christian from the same circles that produced 1 Clement or by a Hellenistic Jew, for that matter.

## 6. Conclusion

Davila's book entertains novel approaches toward the issue of the provenance of ancient texts. The methodological principles put forward by the author are complicated, if not at times confusing. One thing is certain: this book will force scholars to rethink their methodological positions. The suggestion to work back from available manuscript materials can be fruitful. I wonder whether it would not be worthwhile to apply these insights to a comparable corpus of literature, the Septuagint. The *de novo* writing, the Wisdom of Solomon, is part of this corpus, but the Old Greek texts could be interesting. These texts can be interpreted either from the perspective of their origin, as is done in the "interlinear paradigm" proposed by Albert Pietersma, or from the later reception-historical perspective of the La Bible D'Alexandrie. The LXX Deutsch project endeavors to combine these two perspectives.

Finally, I found the layout of the book not particularly conducive to comfortable reading. This applies especially to the footnotes, which in most cases are compacted on the left page.