Can an apostolic writing that circulated under a false authorial name be regarded as sacred Scripture and as part of the New Testament? This is the central question behind Baum’s study, in which he evaluates pseudepigraphical writings in early Christianity. Baum selects his sources from the material collected by Wolfgang Speyer in *Die literarische Fälschung im heidnischen und christlichen Altertum: Ein Versuch ihrer Deutung* (HAW I/2 (Munich: Beck, 1971), but he disputes Speyer’s thesis of a “genuine religious pseudepigraphy.” Instead, Baum intends to show that, while in antiquity composition by secretaries or students was accepted, “the literary genuineness of a book … was judged entirely on the basis of the origins of its content” (4).

After a definition of the concept in chapter A, the following chapter B seeks to establish that pseudepigraphical authorial names were always identified with an attempt to deceive. Chapter C tries to show, on the basis of the evaluation by church fathers from Tertullian to Jerome of writings recognized to be pseudepigraphical, that pseudepigraphical writings were at least excluded from church use. Chapter D admits that some authors “in the prophetic, i.e., subapostolic period” wrote under the names of prophets or apostles. However, according to Baum this behavior was rejected by many, including Paul, because the Bible, as the word of God, could no contain any lie. Paul, in fact, not only rejected “the invention of unorthodox sayings of the Lord” but also “refused to feign any orthodox sayings of Jesus” (164). The clear consequence for modern canonical theory is thus said to be that pseudepigraphical writings cannot be part of the canon (ch. E). An appendix (198–260) offers bilingual sources (for the most part) from ancient literature and the church fathers in alphabetical order.
The real purpose of Baum’s study seems to be to demonstrate the apostolicity of pseudo-Pauline letters, which Baum simply accepts as letters of Paul. They cannot—so the implicit thesis—be pseudepigraphical, because the “orthodox” church has decided to include them in the canon. There is a deficit in historical-critical competence, not only with regard to the treatment of the Pauline letters and the anachronistic application of the concept of orthodoxy. The study rests on sources from different centuries and contexts, but like the appendix of sources it completely lacks any historical arrangement or description of lines of development and contexts within which the discussion took place. Baum could have read in the work of C. W. Müller, which he cites, that the Neoplatonists of late antiquity were the first to have any systematic discussion of the practice of pseudepigraphical writing and that intent to deceive was only one of many motives they cited. Baum equally omits to note that the church fathers from Tertullian to Jerome, whom he discusses at such length, were in conflict with other Christian groups that had a different opinion about authenticity, and not only in particular cases. Although this study refers at least in part to historical-critical research, in my opinion it can scarcely be called scholarly, and not simply as regards its interpretation of Paul.