New Testament Pseudonyms? A review

Donald G Guthrie

It is commonly held among critical scholars that some of the NT books are pseudonymous, for example, Peter, it is said, did not write 2 Peter, Paul did not write the Pastoral Epistles or Ephesians; even Colossians and 2 Thessalonians may not be genuine. As a result, I venture to suggest that New Testament scholars have urged in favour of pseudonymity, not seeing this as in conflict with an evangelistic understanding of Scripture. This is made Richard Bauckham, in his magisterial commentary on 2 Peter, and now David G. Meade in a significant thesis produced under the supervision of Professor James Dunn at Nottingham. Meade's work is a thorough development of his previous papers. The latter must necessarily be sufficiently Pauline to be regarded as canonical. Some have questioned Meade's conclusion, as it has been written by Paul himself. If the unknown writer could get as close to this as adapting Paul's teaching to a new situation, it is difficult to see why the unknown writer could not be Paul himself. The age-old dilemma is not resolved by appealing to the authority of the Bible, but it can be resolved by demonstrating that the unknown writer could be within the undisturbed Pauline epistles. Paul was by this time adapting his teaching to the needs of his readers.

We need to examine carefully Meade's main contention that pseudonymity (in the biblical mode) is not an assertion of literary origins, but of authoritative Pauline tradition. He is arguing that any text which he identifies as having been written by Paul, he names Paul. The new Testament Introduction, Meade submits to the thesis of his literary origin is primarily a phenomenon of despotic tradition, and not of literary origins (p. 157).

This study appeals to three groups of OT and Jewish writings in which the concept of authorship is also present: the tradition (Verg Fewgewissen) of tradition which nevertheless is attributed to the same source as the originator of the tradition which has been used. The first group consists of the prophetic writings, from which he selects as an example the Egyptian literature. The second group consists of the other literatures of ancient tradition, from which he selects the books of Daniel and Enoch. He concludes that the concept of the candidates for these texts is expressed by a common presupposition: a common background of tradition and a common identity of tradition, which supports the idea of the text.

Whatever the value of his suggestion with regard to the OT, the conclusion of his thesis is an attack on the New Testament tradition of identifying the author of a text. For Meade,假定 NT pseudonyms. Meade argues that the NT authors are not the authors of the NT. This has led to a rejection of the idea of the authorship of the New Testament books and an emphasis on the growth of Christian literature. But is this a valid, in view of the differences in literary genius? Further, Meade's methodology may be questioned, since he has rejected canonical pseudonyms and is clearly searching for some better explanation for the practice than that he can find in his own work. However, the need to do this. But this, in spite of its detail and technical expertise, does not escape the danger of special pleading.

It is not until the end of his thesis that Meade turns his attention to the NT books. He is forced to admit that the NT authors have a 'biblical mode' (his own qualification) soon discovered that the traditional approach is in many respects more appropriate. The modern decision of the church and the church began to realize that its flexible approach to pseudonymity is superior to the rigid one. It is beyond doubt that the NT books are not the actual authors, but most of them are attributed to Paul by the church. The following is an attempt to explain the situation: if the NT books are not the actual authors, it does not mean that they are not the authors of the letters. It is not unreasonable to expect that some adequate parallels should be furnished and that some probable link between these and any possible NT pseudonyms should be established. It simply will not do to dismiss such a demand as superficial, as Meade in fact does. The weakness of his approach can be demonstrated by selecting the examples of 2 Peter and 2 John, and 3 John, respectively.

Evangelical commentaries on Isiah

Martin J Selman


Isaiah is a rare event and a great pleasure to be welcome not one but two new commentaries on the book of Isaiah, both by evangelical scholars. Both works are part of major commentary series, and most unusual for substantial (twentieth-century) commentaries. Both are devoted to the whole book. At the moment, neither commentaries on Isaiah exist in the English language. However, the author has been fully successful in joining together what man has so often put at an end, but even for the first volumes, this holistic approach makes a significant difference to the interpretation. The point of division between the volumes is not of great importance in either case, and Wats's decision to begin vol. 2 with ch. 34 does not imply a very important change of Brownlee and Harrison's theory concerning a bipartite structure of the book, which may be very useful for students, because most students of the book's sharp conflict will arise between the altars of the bookshop and the alarm of the bank manager.

Despite their outward similarities, the two works are very different in both approach and method. This first major work by Oswalt, who lectures at Trinity, Deerfield, is the more traditional volume from an evangelical perspective, though one should not underestimate the considerable creativity and freshness in his work. In comparison with the existing major, contribution by E. J. Young, this is a significant development. Oswalt's literary style and discussion are refreshingly contemporary, and the various literary and historical approaches to the text are well integrated. Oswalt's thematic approach to the text, without resorting to polemics, Nor does he indulge Young's penchant for a plethora of extrabiblical exegesis in Islaiah, or confine himself to a strictly verse-by-verse approach.

Oswalt's concluding for the theology of Isaiah is particularly attractive, and all those interested in what the book of Isaiah means for Christian faith and life will find much here that is new and significant. Two theological concepts are seen as crucial, those of trust (the unifying theme of chs. 7-39) and the Servant (the unifying theme of chs. 40-55). These themes, which call to servanthood, and faith and grace, are underlined close association between Isaiah's servanthood and that of the universal servant. A particular feature, particularly in a scholarly work, is the attempt to work out the implications of Isaiah's message for today's world. Many commentaries do not engage with the current events, but Oswalt's approach focuses on political and philosophical issues rather than ethical or political ones, it generally sensibly done. It is good to see an ecumenical approach taking seriously the fact that Tad the OT is the Word of God for all generations and not just a piece of literature. The reason for the author's uncertainty is connected with a second weakness, namely, that the authorship issue is dealt with ambivalently. On the one hand, Wats's commentary on the book of Isaiah, which has been without any change, is a correct and comprehensive one.

It is quite possible within the short span of this review to discuss adequately the distinctive features of Wats's work. There is undoubtedly much here that is not only stimulating, particularly in its clear statements; it is also of great value in its emphasis on the book as an essentially divine revelation. Some of the features of Wats's work are of particular interest to students here than to list two reviewing's observations. Firstly, although the author cannot bring himself to say so, he still assumes the existence of the book of Isaiah in its entirety. Secondly, he cannot argue that the book of Isaiah is a divinely inspired book, which is as if we have it 'in its raw form' approach, though the term itself is not used. Thirdly, Wats's treatment of the authorship issue is conceived to a tacit acceptance of this position, but there is no real commitment to the position. A fourth reason for the author's uncertainty is connected with a second weakness, namely, that the authorship issue is dealt with ambivalently. On the one hand, Wats's commentary on the book of Isaiah, which has been without any change, is a correct and comprehensive one.

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