The Genre of 2 Peter: A Comparison with Jewish and Early Christian Testaments

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Commentators frequently default to the thesis that 2 Peter belongs to the testament genre and would have been readily received as a pseudepigraphical writing by the early church. It is also argued that later framers of the NT canon would not have recognized the Jewish nature of the convention and thus, after much debate, received it as genuine. This essay compares the so-called testamentary features of 2 Peter with Jewish and early Christian testaments and demonstrates that it is unlikely that either of these positions is sustainable.

Key Words: 2 Peter, testament, farewell speech, death, deathbed, pseudepigrapha, genre

INTRODUCTION

The genuineness of 2 Peter has been continually challenged both before and after its acceptance into the NT canon and, since the turn of the 20th century, has faced the unabating indictment of pseudonymity. Modern scholars have marshaled a significant array of challenges against its authenticity, a thorough analysis of which is provided in a recent article by Kruger. Prior to this, the last to defend its authenticity vigorously were Spitta and Bigg. This method of argumentation, however, seems to have reached an impasse and the majority opinion now is that 2 Peter is a pseudoapostolic letter. The keystone argument for the pseudepigraphal character of the letter is the proposal that it belongs to the testament genre.

The genesis of this argument springs from Johannes Munck’s work in the 1950s, which compared the farewell discourses of Jacob (Gen 47:29–50:14) and Moses (Deut 31–33) with analogous traditions found in the NT writings. Bauckham’s development of this thesis has become the seminal work in establishing 2 Peter as a testament and thus a pseudoapostolic letter. In his study, he concludes that the testamentary features of 2 Peter were so numerous that they “would leave no contemporary reader in doubt that 2 Peter belonged to the genre of ‘testament.’”

The present study wishes to address this statement directly by comparing the testamentary literature of the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple period to the passages of 2 Peter that Bauckham has highlighted. Assuming for the sake of argument that 2 Peter’s readers made this sort of connection, to what degree does the testament genre imply pseudonymity? I would like to say at the onset that I am engaging Professor Bauckham’s thesis most rigorously not because I feel he has misrepresented the position, because at numerous points in his commentary he draws attention to competing possibilities to his own argument. It is how Bauckham’s thesis has been received by subsequent scholars as a settled matter that I am critiquing. Conclusions will follow that allow us to consider whether there is any value in genre related comparative studies and will offer a new suggestion for how to approach the testamentary nature of 2 Peter and its implications concerning pseudonymity. First, however, it is necessary to clarify the use of terms related to “pseudepigraphon” in this essay.

CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

At the risk of being too pedantic, the term pseudepigraphon in its strict sense refers to a written work that is “falsely” attributed to another person. Ironically, the earliest attestation of the term is used in connection with the Gospel of Peter, where Eusebius, quoting Serapion, refers to documents that are “falsely ascribed” (ψευδεπίγραφον) to apostles; that is, they are written in the first person and their authors claim to be the individuals whose names they use. Here, we can formally speak of pseudonymity.

7. These are indicated below, pp. 55, 62–63.
Within modern scholarship, however, the term *pseudepigrapha* has an altogether different meaning. The term has somewhat taken on a life of its own in the sense that it has become a catchall designation or a technical term that refers to a growing corpus of literature that are not part of the Jewish or Western Christian canons. The term used as a “category” of literature is frequently confused with the ancient meaning of pseudonymity. Consequently, it is a common assumption that the documents included in the category of pseudepigrapha are pseudonymous in the sense of the ancient meaning.

In ancient Jewish literature, pseudepigraphy normally takes one of two forms: the author (1) takes up the name of an important ancient figure and, within a third-person narrative framework, communicates in the first person (*1 Enoch*, *2 Baruch*) or (2) writes within this same narrative format and attributes to an ancient figure certain divinely received knowledge, wisdom, or instruction (*Jubilees*, *Testament of Job*). Under the broader heading of pseudepigrapha, these writings are actually anonymous in the sense that the authors do not reveal their true identity but do not claim to be the figure through whom they are speaking. Confusion arises from the overlapping use of terms and has posed additional problems when speaking of the degree to which anonymous pseudepigraphal writings were received in the early church communities. Scholars are correct, on the one hand, to suggest that the practice of taking up the name of patriarchal figures in these anonymous works was widely received. On the other hand, the examples above indicate that pseudonymity proper was rejected.


11. Pseudonymity was considered dishonorable and largely rejected by the Greeks and Romans as forgery. While many ancient writers used pseudonyms (Xenophon, Aristophanes, and others), they did not do so with the intent to benefit from the use of a famous person’s name. Jewish traditions, on the other hand, frequently appropriated names from the Hebrew Bible to substantiate their revelatory claims in harmony with older traditions. Thus, to say that pseudonymity was accepted in Greco-Roman traditions begs the questions of context and motive. See Wolfgang Speyer, *Die literarische Fälschung im heidnischen und christlichen Altertum* (HAT; Munich: Beck, 1971), 29–31.

12. Loren T. Stuckenbruck, “Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha.” I am grateful to Prof. Stuckenbruck for allowing me to read this article prior to its publication.

13. An example of the ambiguity in discussions of “pseudepigraphon” can be seen in Kruger’s article in which he questions Bauckham’s thesis that pseudepigraphal writings were widely received among the early church communities but also cites evidence of pseudonymity. Scholars are generally agreed that pseudonymous writings were largely rejected as forgeries (Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2004], 323), such as the *Gospel of Peter* and the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*. However, this is not the claim Bauckham is making. His approach is much more balanced, suggesting that 2 Peter would have been seen as a “testament,” which was regarded as an anonymous writing. Kruger is ask-
Thus, a distinction should be evident between (1) pseudonymity proper, (2) anonymous pseudepigraphal literature, and (3) the modern category of literature known as “pseudepigrapha.” When referring to this body of pseudepigraphal literature, de Jonge rightly notes, “only in a relatively restricted number of instances can one properly speak of pseudonymity.”

**HISTORY OF THE ARGUMENT**

In the 1950s Johannes Munck contributed an essay to an edited work, *Aux Sources de la Tradition Chrétienne*, in which he compared “farewell discourses” in the Hebrew Bible with analogous literary forms found in the NT and noted in particular the growth of the tradition in the Second Temple period. Munck called attention to the following texts that employ this tradition in the NT: John 13–17, Acts 20:17–38, 2 Tim 4:6–8, 2 Pet 1:14–15. With the exception of the epistolary literature, these NT examples follow closely to the traditions found in the Hebrew Bible and some Second Temple writings with regard to form in that they are discourses that anticipate the imminent death of the speaker that are embedded in a larger narrative. 2 Timothy 4:6–8 and 2 Pet 1:12–15 were included only because they refer to the imminent death of the writer, though this does not occur within a narrative framework, a distinction Munck did not make. He did, however, recognize the distinction between these traditions and the formal independent testaments. He noted that both the farewell discourses of the Hebrew Bible and formal testaments of the first and second centuries A.D. cast a vision for the future of the descendants to whom the patriarch is speaking and the danger of falling into a particular sin, while the NT examples warn against false teachers and scoffers who will infiltrate the church in the future. He made no assumptions concerning pseudonymity and the literature that utilized the testamentary features. In his examination, Munck concludes that 2 Peter represents a “farewell speech” (*discours d’adieu*).

Bo Reicke suggested that 2 Peter was a testament in form. He rightly suggests that the testamentary literature of the late first century A.D. grew

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14. Marinus de Jonge, *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament as Part of Christian Literature: The Case of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs and the Greek Life of Adam and Eve* (ed. Michael A. Knibb et al.; SVTP 18; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 17. For example, the *Astronomical Book* is pseudonymous, though it assumes the reader recognizes it is a continuation of the *Book of Watchers*. Also, the first vision in the *Book of Dreams* is pseudonymous, although it was a later addition to the *Animal Apocalypse*, which is framed by the third-person narrative.


16. Ibid., 164.

17. Ibid., 162.

18. Reicke, *James, Peter, and Jude*, 146.
out of the farewell discourses in the Hebrew Bible and that the two were to be closely associated. However, he cites the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs as the classic example of the literary form and then very casually associates 2 Peter with the same, though offering no analysis to substantiate this claim. The previous work by Munck did not make these associations as closely as Reicke. Rather, it pointed out the similarities between the material in an effort to demonstrate the shared tradition. Reicke, on the one hand, categorically associates the form of 2 Peter with Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs. On the other hand, he demonstrates similarities based only on content, that is, imminent death, ethical admonitions, revelations of the future. Consequently, Reicke downplays the presence of epistolary features in 2 Peter, attributing this to the author’s use of the testament. He suggests that the lack of any formal close to the letter indicates the writer is more interested in the testament genre. He suggests that the writer’s mention of his imminent death and foretelling of false teachers “justifies the designation of Second Peter as a testament.”

19 It is here that the boundaries between a farewell discourse and a formal testament are blurred and where the term genre begins to be loosely applied to both.

Bauckham’s attempt at classifying 2 Peter as a testament is considerably stronger and much more developed than his predecessors. He tempers Reicke’s overstatement by suggesting that 2 Peter is a dual genre of “letter-testament,” a proposal he bases on an analogy with the Epistle of Enoch and 2 Baruch 78–87.20 He points out four passages that he suggests the original recipients would have “obviously” recognized as a testament: (1) 1:3–11, (2) 1:12–15, (3) 2:1–3, and (4) 3:1–4.

This brief analysis allows us to see how previous studies have spoken about testamentary literature and its relationship to 2 Peter. These and other scholars have distinguished between farewell speeches and independent testaments on the one hand but frequently utilize these terms synonymously on the other.21 Thus, the need presents itself to define the genre formally and identify the literature that fits the category. Moreover, an examination of the testamentary literature will help to distinguish between farewell speeches and independent testaments in order to discern where 2 Peter fits into the discussion.

THE TESTAMENT GENRE

It has been noted that there is no genre more elusive to recognize than the testament.22 This may be due to the various ways scholars have sought to define the phenomenon. Some emphasize content, noting the pervasive
features of both farewell speeches and testaments. However, the lack of consensus on these defining characteristics and the disparity in persistent features among farewell discourses and testaments has caused some to suggest that the genre cannot be determined by content alone. Others consider form to be the primary means of classification. In this regard a “testament” is a formal independent work that grows out of the tradition of farewell discourses in the Hebrew Bible. Collins notes that the “most fundamental defining characteristic of a testament is that it is a discourse delivered in anticipation of imminent death.” In each case, this occurs within a third-person narrative framework in which the dying man speaks in the first person. The coherent use of the narrative framework indicates that it too is a “distinguishing characteristic” of the genre testament.

Within the Second Temple period, there are three clear examples of this phenomenon: Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, Testament of Moses (Assumption of Moses), and Testament of Job.

De Jonge has questioned whether one can speak in terms of a genre at all. Rather, it becomes a question of how different communities within the Second Temple period adapted and reshaped traditions to fit their own needs. For the sake of this study and for clarity when speaking about the different forms of the tradition, some degree of precision in terms will aid in the discussion. This distinction will allow us to consider the differ-


27. J. J. Collins, “Testaments,” 326. The Visions of Amran 4Q543–548 has testamentary features but is not a formal testament. Testament of Abraham is not actually a testament but is an apocalypse and does not include any farewell speech at all. Testament of Solomon is a third-century A.D. work that is interested primarily in demonology. It is written in the third person and includes some elements of the testament but does not include the death or burial of Solomon. Testament of Adam is late (5th century A.D.) and consists of three parts, the second of which alone contains testamentary elements. For an analysis of these documents, see Collins, “Testaments,” 326–29; George W. E. Nickelsburg, Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah (2nd ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 301–27.

ent forms of the convention that were circulating in the Second Temple period and into the second century A.D. in order to determine how the early Christian communities would have viewed 2 Peter alongside these various traditions.

Farewell Discourses

The primary example of a farewell speech is that found in Gen 49:1–50:14. Here, the account has all the earmarks of an independent testament, though it is embedded in the larger narrative of Genesis. Certain features in the farewell speech of Jacob become paradigmatic for formal, independent testaments of the late Second Temple period into the second century A.D. (Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, Testament of Issac, Testament of Jacob). For example, introduced with a brief third-person introduction, a patriarchal figure calls his children or followers to his deathbed, where he announces his impending death and offers revelations of the future and ethical admonitions. The death of the figure is then narrated, as well as his burial and a response by those who are present (see Deut 32:48–34:8; Josh 23–24; 1 Sam 12; 1 Kgs 2:1–10; 1 Chr 28–29). While this pattern is not always rigidly followed, the farewell speech itself becomes a popular rhetorical device in the Second Temple period and is found in a number of works (1 En. 93:1–3; 91:1–19; Tob 14:3–11; 2 Bar. 77–86; Jub. 21–22; 36:1–18; Josephus, Ant. 4.309–19). Through this device, Second Temple writers were able to legitimize their messages by placing their admonitions and warnings on the lips of a dying man. These accounts differ in whether they include the death of the figure, as well as other distinct features.

The farewell discourse is also found in the NT, most noticeably in John 13–17 and Acts 20:17–38. These passages demonstrate the writers’ concerns over the imminent death of the speakers, the threat of persecution, and false teachers and scoffers in the future. Both have reworked the farewell discourse into their narratives to fit their present context. The gathering of the disciples at table with Jesus and Paul’s calling of the elders together indicates the writers are following at least some basic elements of the tradition. The most consistent feature in all of these occurrences, however, is the third-person narrative framework.

Independent Testaments

As noted above, scholars have focused on two aspects of the testament genre: (1) form and (2) content. Following this bifurcation, the independent testaments will be discussed within these categories.

Form of the Testament

With regard to form, two items are prominent. (1) The figure to whom the writing refers is always an ancient figure in Israel’s history. Even among those documents not formally considered testaments, the subject of the text is always a famous figure from the distant past: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Levi, Solomon, Enoch, and so on. The latest person to whom a pseudepigraphic writing is attributed is Ezra. By attaching these names to their compositions, authors were able to obtain an audience for their own views and even achieve a certain credibility in interpretive disputes within their tradition. While this may seem strange to the modern reader, these kinds of pseudepigraphal writings were widely circulated and received within the early Christian communities. To be sure, traditions reflected in the earliest Enochic texts concerning angels, demons, the immortality of the soul, and hell are often presupposed among the NT writers. Moreover, 2 Peter alludes to the Fall of the Watchers (2 Pet 2:14, Jude 6) and Jude actually quotes 1 En. 1:9. It is not surprising then to know that it is considered canonical in the Ethiopic Orthodox Church.

(2) Each testament begins with and is cast within a third-person narrative. In the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, a formulaic narrative introduction follows the pattern “A copy of the words/testament of x which he spoke/commanded to his sons.” In the Testament of Moses, the first three lines are missing from the text but likely included a reference to the years of Moses’ life or the year when he spoke to Joshua. However, beginning in line 4, the narrative structure of the work can be detected:

When after the exodus, which had been led by Moses, the people had gone up to Amman across the Jordan; this is the prophecy which was made by Moses in the Book of Deuteronomy. Moses called to himself Joshua. (T. Mos. 1:4–6)

The Testament of Job offers a similar narrative introduction:

The book of the words of Job. . . Now on the day when, having fallen ill, he began to settle his affairs, he called his seven sons and his three daughters . . . when he had called his children he said, “Gather round my children, gather round that I may show you the things which the Lord did with me.” (T. Job 1:1–4)

30. Stuckenbruck, “Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha.” See also Kruger (“Authenticity of 2 Peter,” 646), who asks, “if no one was deceived by such a device, then one wonders why it was used at all. What purpose would it serve if all who read such a document knew exactly what was happening?” This betrays a modern, Western mindset that does not see the value Jews placed on associating their writings with sacred tradition. In one sense, by utilizing the name of the revered figure, the author was placing his or her views within the trajectory of sacred tradition. A fine example of this is the growth of the Enochic tradition over a period of three or more centuries.

31. Also included are Jubilees and 4 Baruch.

32. This feature is only absent in Testament of Asher.

Certain basic elements can be found across a variety of independent testaments. They are: (1) a deathbed scene, (2) moral exhortations, (3) predictions of the future, (4) the death of the patriarch, (5) his burial, and (6) the lamentation over his death by his followers. The deathbed scene in particular performs a formal function to make a point that might not otherwise be received and is a vital element in the content of the testament. However, Testament of Asher lacks any deathbed scene and is said to be healthy when he gives his farewell discourse (T. Ash. 1:2), though his death and burial are still recorded (T. Ash. 8:1–2). Testament of Job does not include any ethical admonitions or revelation of the future but merely recounts the life of Job. Of course, the story itself has ethical implications and encourages faithfulness in the time of suffering. Yet, it includes the narrative framework, deathbed scene, death, burial, and response of his children.

The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs follows a consistent pattern that includes an episode within the life of each patriarch that refers to a particular vice or virtue. In the case of the former, the children are discouraged from committing the same sins as the father. Likewise, the positive trait depicted in the latter becomes the model for right behavior in the future. These future predictions follow a Deuteronomistic theology of sin-punishment-restoration (T. Lev. 10, 14–16; T. Jud. 23; T. Iss. 6; T. Zeb. 9; T. Dan 5; T. Naph. 4; T. Ash. 7; T. Ben. 9).

The dating and provenance of the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs has become a point of contention among scholars. Some suggest they are a Christian composition, while others argue for a Jewish provenance with later Christian interpolations. It is not within the scope of this study to argue for either a Jewish or Christian provenance. However, considered in light of later Christian testaments (Testament of Isaac, Testament of Jacob), both of which follow the literary form of the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, it is possible to say that these traditions were circulating among the

36. Testament of Moses also lacks a deathbed scene. The ending of the manuscript is lost and thus we cannot know whether the death and burial are recorded, though the reference in Jude 9 indicates it likely was.
early Christian communities. Moreover, they were transmitted and come down to us in their final form through the hands of the early church. Moreover, the frequent use of the farewell speech in Jewish literature and the poor attestation of any formal testaments in the early Second Temple period suggest that the documents we have examined did not come into their present form until sometime in the late first–early second centuries A.D. Thus, it is possible to suggest that these early Christian communities were receiving these pseudepigraphal writings and would have been familiar with the form and content of the independent testaments. The question then becomes to what degree can we say there were analogous forms of a testament within an epistle circulating that influenced the “new” convention of the letter-testament?

THE DUAL GENRE “LETTER-TESTAMENT”

Epistle of Enoch

Baukham’s thesis suggests the Epistle of Enoch is an early example of the dual genre “letter-testament.” However, there are challenges to this analogy that have not been thoroughly discussed in his study. First, the Epistle of Enoch is comprised of five constituent parts: (1) Apocalypse of Weeks (1 En. 93:1–10; 91:11–17), (2) Exhortation (1 En. 91:1–10, 18–19), (3) Epistle (1 En. 92:1–5; 93:11–105:2), (4) Birth of Noah (1 En. 106:1–107:3) and (5) Eschatological Admonition (1 En. 108:1–15). The composite nature of the document is evident and the farewell discourse in question (1 En. 91:1–10) was likely an independent composition that served as a literary bridge between the earlier Enochic traditions and the Epistle. Some have suggested that it may have been an appendix either to the Astronomical Book or the Dream Visions. In either case, what is important to note is that Enoch’s farewell speech does not occur within the Epistle proper as is has been suggested. In his commentary, when referring to the Epistle, Bauckham cites chs. 91–104. However, it is widely understood that the epistle proper only

40. Anthony E. Harvey, “The Testament of Simeon Peter,” in A Tribute to Geza Vermes: Essays on Jewish and Christian Literature and History (ed. Phillip R. Davies and Richard T. White; JSOTSup 100; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 346. Consequently, Bauckham’s argument turns on itself when he states that we can expect the early “Gentile” church, in terms of discussing canonicity, was no longer familiar with the Jewish literary convention of the testament (Jude, 2 Peter, 162).


44. For the former view see Olson, Enoch, 260 n. 1; Nickelsburg, Jewish Literature, 150–51. For the latter view, see Siegbert Uhlig, Apokalypsen: Das äthiopische Henochbuch (Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit 6; Gütersloher: Mohn, 1984), 6:673–74.

includes chs. 92–105.\textsuperscript{46} His inclusion of the testamentary bridge (\textit{1 En.} 91) within the \textit{Epistle} is tenuous and gives the impression that the testamentary section actually occurs within the letter. While the \textit{Epistle of Enoch} includes a farewell speech and an epistle, they are constituent parts and do not represent a “letter-testament.”

Other challenges include questions of content. While the \textit{Epistle} does include a farewell speech, there is no announcement of imminent death because Enoch simply departed. Moreover, it is Methuselah who summons Enoch’s children to gather for his instruction and not Enoch himself, an unusual feature in a farewell discourse. Consequently, scholars do not consider the \textit{Epistle} as an exemplar of the testament genre.\textsuperscript{47} At the same time, the \textit{Epistle} specifically denounces those who “compose scriptures in their own name” (\textit{1 En.} 104:10), a phrase some have suggested refers to Ben Sira.\textsuperscript{48} If this is the case, this may suggest a preference for anonymous pseudepigrapha and would equally apply to anyone writing as if they were composing in their own name. Thus, the \textit{Epistle of Enoch} does not reflect a genre of testament or a dual genre of letter-testament but merely demonstrates features of a farewell discourse.

\textit{2 Baruch} 78–87

\textit{2 Baruch} 78–87 is quite a different case. Early studies suggested that the textual tradition indicates that chs. 1–77 should be considered separately from the attached letter in 78–87, a premise on which Bauckham’s position is based.\textsuperscript{49} More recently scholars have argued that this an integral part of the apocalypse and have defended the unity of the document.\textsuperscript{50} However, Bauckham’s thesis is suggestive. The letter at the end of this work bears a striking resemblance to the form and content of \textit{2 Peter}. This is one of the strongest points in his argument. Prior to his death, the people of Israel ask Baruch to write a letter. To this end, he writes two letters, one to the Jews of the dispersion in Assyria and one to the captives in Babylon, though

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{46} Stuckenbruck, \textit{1 Enoch} 91–108, 1; Olson, \textit{Enoch}, 216; Nickelsburg, \textit{1 Enoch} 1, 416.
  \item \textsuperscript{48} J. T. Milik, \textit{The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumr\={a}n Cave 4} (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), 50. See also, Nickelsburg, \textit{1 Enoch} 1, 533–34, who suggests this may be a critique of writings the Enochic author did not view as having divine authority. It could, however, indicate a concern over writers who refer to Enoch the person but do not attach their writings to the Enochic tradition (for example, Ben Sira, \textit{Jubilees}). See Stuckenbruck, \textit{1 Enoch} 91–108, 593.
  \item \textsuperscript{49} A. F. J. Klijn, “2 (Syriac Apocalypse of) Baruch,” \textit{OTP}, 1:615.
\end{itemize}
only the contents of the first letter are included. Bauckham presents 2 Bar. 78–86 as a Jewish testament in letter form and the fact that the letter in this work is communicated in the first person, bearing a strong resemblance to 2 Peter.

One can see how this would lead to the suggestion that 2 Baruch represents a letter-testament. However, other issues arise that bring the argument into question. Bauckham himself admits that the letter in 2 Baruch occurs within the third-person narrative of the apocalypse. This does not preclude the fact that the Epistola Baruch circulated independently, and extant copies of the letter indicate this is the case. Yet, even these independent versions include different headings that begin with a short, third-person introduction.

2 Peter as a Testament

Bauckham suggests four passages that delineate 2 Peter as an exemplar of the testament genre: (1) First is 2 Pet 1:3–11, which he identifies as a miniature homily and compares to the farewell discourse in 2 Esd 14:27–36. Yet, an analysis of the latter shows that it follows a similar pattern of sin-punishment-restoration as that found in other Jewish testamentary literature. While there are similarities between 1:3–11 and homiletical speeches, a better proposal has been offered by Danker, who indicates the form follows the Greco-Roman rhetorical pattern of a patron-client relationship. The passage begins by highlighting Jesus’ divine power, through which he has given (δίδωμι) believers everything they need for life and godliness and has delivered them from present corruption (1:3–4). This benefaction is based solely on the glory and goodness of Christ. On the basis of his magnanimity, believers can expect to receive continued benefaction by participation in the divine nature in the future (1:4). This hope in the generosity and goodness of Christ calls the readers to aspire to higher virtues (1:5), which are often attributed to benefactors.

(2) 2 Peter 1:12–15, Bauckham rightly notes, “is full of language typical of farewell speeches.” The text clearly announces the imminent death of the apostle and denotes a concern that the recipients “remember” his teaching, language that is reminiscent of both farewell speeches and formal testaments. These strong similarities make it possible to suggest that readers would recall the tradition of testamentary literature. Finally, the predictions of the false teachers in (3) 2:1–3 and (4) 3:1–4 also evoke the future.

51. There are different headings for the letter portion, yet the one attached to the apocalypse and the independent versions all begin with a short, third-person introduction.
52. There are 36 different texts of the letter in Syriac; Klijn, “2 (Syriac Apocalypse of) Baruch,” 615–20.
55. Bauckham, Jude, 2 Peter, 132.
revelations of the testamentary literature. Taken together with the ethical admonitions (1:5–7, 10; 3:14–18), it becomes possible to suggest that these texts would bring to the mind of the reader the tradition of a dying man providing instruction in his “last words.” But the degree to which these texts “would leave no contemporary reader in doubt that 2 Peter belonged to the genre of testament” is an entirely different scenario. It is this thesis that the present study challenges.

Certain assumptions that are inherent in Bauckham’s thesis become evident when compared against the texts above. For example, the argument that ethical admonitions and revelations of the future reflect the primary content of a testament is overly reductionistic. Certain key features persist throughout all of the formal testaments and many of the farewell speeches that are absent in 2 Peter. There is no deathbed scene or gathering of his followers, nor does it record the death or burial of the apostle. In addition, to write in the name of a person so close to their time of death is also unusual for the testamentary literature. To be sure, the Testaments of Isaac and Jacob, both Christian compositions, as well as other pseudepigraphal literature, demonstrate that the use of patriarchal figures to communicate instruction to Christian communities was still in vogue during the first two centuries A.D.

More importantly, however, is the author’s communication in the first person. The most consistent feature that is attested in all of the farewell speeches and formal testaments is the use of the third-person narrative framework. Given the fact that first-person accounts attributed to Paul and Peter were rejected by the early church, it seems unreasonable to assume that (1) this would be an effective medium of expression if one wanted to attribute this teaching to Peter after his death or (2) that the recipients would have viewed it as a fictive, pseudepigraphal testament.

Summary and Conclusions

This essay has hoped to accomplish two goals: (1) to establish the difference between a testament as pseudepigrapha, that is, a category of literature, and pseudepigraphon in the strict sense of a writing falsely attributed to another person; and (2) to distinguish between documents that belong to the testament genre and the tradition of the farewell discourse that are incorporated into a larger work. Both the independent testaments and farewell discourses from the Second Temple period belong to the broad category of pseudepigrapha but are all anonymous writings. The secondary literature that suggests 2 Peter is an exemplar of the testament genre does so in a manner that is too casual and more precision is needed to avoid confusion. In light of these clarifications, the following conclusions can be made concerning 2 Peter.

(1) While 2 Peter does include some basic elements of the tradition of the farewell speech, it lacks significant features that are evident in most

56. Ibid.
testaments, that is, deathbed scene, ancient figure from Israel’s past, death, burial, response. More importantly, it lacks the most consistent element, the third-person narrative framework. (2) The Christian interpolations in the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs and the Christian Testaments of Isaac and Jacob indicate that the early Christian communities that received 2 Peter would have been thoroughly familiar with the features of the genre. An analysis of these documents reveals that it is highly unlikely that it would have been viewed as a testament. (3) The comparison of 2 Peter to the Epistle of Enoch and 2 Baruch should also be reconsidered, because these documents clearly adhere to the convention of the farewell discourse and do not reflect a developing tradition of a “letter-testament.” 2 Peter is an epistle that refers to the imminent death of the apostle. In that sense, it would evoke ideas associated with the tradition of the farewell speech. At the same time, as an epistle written in the first person, we can surmise that 2 Peter would have been received as either a genuine letter or a forgery.