Revelatory Experience and Pseudepigraphical Attribution in Early Jewish Apocalypses

ARMIN D. BAUM
FREIE THEOLOGISCHE HOCHSCHULE (FTH) GIESEN AND EVANGELISCHE THEOLOGISCHE FACULTEIT (ETF) LEUVEN

Early Jewish apocalypses claimed to contain the content of revelatory experiences. These revelatory claims were widely perceived by ancient readers of apocalyptic texts. As far as ancient evidence and modern analogies go, at least some authors of pseudepigraphical apocalypses may have been honestly convinced that they were actually presenting more than human dreams and messages. The plausible assumption that at least some apocalyptic texts originated from genuine ecstatic experiences does not, however, offer any reason to suppose that their literary attributions were not measured against the generally accepted ancient standards of authenticity. If an author who was honestly convinced that he had received much of his book’s content from an angel published his apocalyptic text under the name of an ancient prophet, this attribution was, according to ancient standards, deceptive, because there was no justification for tracing its content back to the biblical prophet. By attributing not only the content but also the recording of their apocalyptic books to ancient seers and by explicitly claiming that their books had been carefully transmitted from the remote times of the biblical prophets to the present, the apocalyptic authors clearly intended to deceive their readers about the true origin of their books.

Key Words: ancient standards of authenticity, authorship, deception, early Jewish apocalypses, forgery, literary attribution, onthonymity, pseudepigraphy, revelatory experience

Early Jewish apocalypses were usually published pseudonymously. The authorial intention that stood behind the pseudepigraphical ascriptions of these apocalyptic texts is controversial. Did the ancient authors who made use of this literary genre want to pretend that their books were written by Enoch, Baruch, or Ezra? And should we therefore classify their texts as

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literary forgeries? Or did they make use of a common literary convention that was understood by (many of) their readers and should therefore not be regarded as deceptive?

This rather complex question has sometimes been answered by referring to the genuineness of the religious experiences of the apocalyptic authors. The authorial attributions of apocalyptic texts to ancient figures such as Enoch, it is claimed, may not be regarded as deceptive because the apocalyptists experienced some kind of supernatural inspiration or identification with their biblical heroes.

The thesis that early Jewish apocalyptic pseudepigrapha must not be regarded as literary forgeries has also been defended on the basis of the argument that the prophetic names in (the headings of) apocalyptic texts were not meant to identify authorship. The apocalyptists did not want to delude their readers. Rather, they made use of a transparent literary device. Their readers understood that by using the names of ancient prophets the apocalyptic authors claimed to offer not prophetic revelation but merely an interpretation of previous revelation. Therefore, the visions of Dan 7–12 (that did not go back to the prophet Daniel of the sixth century B.C.) might only be regarded as deceptive by “the average lay reader of the Bible who has not been initiated into the critical approach.”

When early Jewish apocalyptists updated the normative statements of canonized authorities in the past for contemporary theological challenges, they wanted to identify not the authors of their books but rather the theological traditions to which their books belonged. Because the ancient authors of apocalyptic texts were unaware of the modern concept of “authentic attribution” labels such as deceptive pseudepigraphy do not do justice to the books they produced. Ancient readers who assessed OT and early Jewish pseudepigraphy as a specious and fraudulent practice grossly misunder-

stood the intention of the authors. This second interpretation of apocalyptic pseudepigraphy as a nondeceptive literary device cannot be covered in the present article. I hope to deal with it in a future study.

Before I try to deal with the multilayered relationship between authorial attribution and religious experience, I will first present common definitions of the terms apocalypse and pseudepigraphical literature. Second, I will offer a short review of the most important research pertaining to the deceptive or nondeceptive character of apocalyptic literature. Third, I will summarize the most important internal and external ancient evidence for the revelatory claims made in early Jewish apocalypses. Fourth, I will compare this evidence to modern examples of literary attribution and revelatory experiences in apocalyptic literature. Finally, I will review the evidence and evaluate the scholarly claim that genuine revelatory experiences as such preclude a deceptive intention on the part of the authors of ancient Jewish apocalypses.

Definitions

As is well known, the Greek term apocalypse means “disclosure” or “revelation.” The author of the NT Revelation of John was the first to use it to describe a series of revelatory visions disclosing the end of the present age (Rev 1:1). Since the 19th century, the word apocalypse has been used as a generic term to describe early Jewish books, written between 200 B.C. and A.D. 200, that are similar to the Revelation of John in form and content. Apocalyptic books such as Dan 7–12, 1 Enoch, or 4 Ezra usually present a first-person report about a revelation of a supernatural world or eschatological salvation that is received in a dream or vision and usually mediated by an otherworldly being.

For the purpose of this paper, it is necessary to repeat a generally accepted definition of the literary phenomenon of pseudepigraphy and to add a few further qualifications. A “pseudepigraphon” is considered to be a piece of literature that did not originate from the author whose name it bears. A close English equivalent for the foreign word pseudepigraphy would be “false attribution” or “false ascription.” In this article, I am dealing not

6. Annette Yoshiko Reed, “Pseudepigraphy, Authorship, and the Reception of ‘The Bible’ in Late Antiquity,” in The Reception and Interpretation of the Bible in Late Antiquity (ed. L. DiTommaso; The Bible in Ancient Christianity 6; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 469–90.


with secondary but with primary pseudepigraphy, that is, pseudepigraphy produced not by one of a book’s readers but by the author(s) of a book.9

Because our topic is the pseudepigraphy of apocalyptic books, we are concerned with false attributions of books that claim to be divine revelation. Were these visionary books ascribed to ancient biblical figures with or without deceptive intent?

**A Short Review of Research**

As a review of the literature on the topic reveals, a major group of scholars has argued for the presence of nondeceptive pseudepigraphy in apocalyptic writings (pp. 70–73 below). Yet, the nondeceptive character of apocalyptic pseudepigraphy is not uncontested (pp. 68–70 below).

*Apocalyptic Pseudepigraphy as Literary Forgery*

Among the main proponents of the thesis that by ascribing their books to ancient biblical figures the authors of apocalyptic texts intended to delude their readers are Keil, Charles, Smith, Aune, and Beckwith.10 Within an interpretive framework which assumes intentional deception in apocalyptic pseudepigraphy these authors accentuate different aspects of literary deception that partially overlap.

*Abuse of Prophecy*

One of the harshest judgments regarding the deceptive character of apocalyptic literature came from the OT scholar Carl Friedrich Keil in Leipzig. In his commentary on the book of Daniel, he wrote in 1869:

If . . . a Maccabean Jew clothe his own self-conceived ideas regarding the development of the war of the heathen world-powers against the people of God in revelations from God, which the prophet living in Babylonian exile might have received, then this undertaking is not merely literary deception, but at the same time an abuse of prophecy, which, as a prophesying out of one’s own heart, is a sin to which God in His law has annexed the punishment of death.11

Keil read the early Jewish device of apocalyptic pseudonymity against the background of the solemn warnings regarding the pretention to prophetic authority in the book of Deuteronomy and related OT texts: Any prophet “who presumes to speak in my name a word that I have not commanded the prophet to speak—that prophet shall die” (Deut 18:20).

Authority of Law and Canon

According to Robert H. Charles, by the time of Ezra and Nehemiah the Jewish law had gained a superior authority. As a consequence, prophecy that wanted to address areas not covered by legal stipulations such as eschatology or even to challenge the dominant interpretation of the law became impossible. In addition to that, the belief in inspiration was dead, and the OT canon was considered closed. Under these historical conditions, orthonymous (that is, correctly ascribed) or anonymous prophecy was hopeless. Pseudonymity became a necessity. From the third century B.C. onward, according to Charles, prophets could only hope to receive a hearing and to exercise influence over the Jewish people if they published their messages under great and authoritative names of the past. As a matter of course, these pseudonymous ascriptions could only fulfil their purpose if they were not transparent but succeeded in deceiving their readers about the true identity of the respective authors.

In a similar way, David E. Aune regards it as probable that apocalyptic pseudonymity was used to secure acceptance of apocalyptic writings as divine revelation. This literary device was necessary in a time when the period of prophetic inspiration was viewed as past and the OT canon was virtually completed. According to Aune, the pseudonymous authors expected that their readers would accept the false attribution. This explanation assumes that apocalyptic pseudepigraphy was motivated by a deceptive intent.

Literary Forgery

Morton Smith, in his major article “Pseudepigraphy in the Israelite Tradition,” not only categorized the pseudo-Mosaic deuteronomic code as probably “the most influential forgery of the world” but also classified the prophecies in Dan 7–12, 1 and 2 Enoch, 2 Baruch, and 4 Ezra as deliberate forgeries. He agreed with Charles that the apocalyptists wrote under the name of the ancient prophets in order to enhance the authority of their books.

Similarly, according to Roger Beckwith in the case of apocalyptic books such as 1 Enoch, the Testament of Levi, the Ascension of Moses, 4 Ezra, and Jubilees “the pseudonym was intended to and did mislead.” Apocalyptic literature “pretended to be by OT worthies, so as to mislead Jewish read-

15. In his review of David S. Russell’s Method and Massage of Jewish Apocalyptic in ThTo 22 (1965): 132–34, Smith also rejects Russell’s explanation of apocalyptic pseudepigraphy as a non-deceptive identification of the apocalyptist with the ancient figure under whose name he wrote.
ers into thinking that those Jewish authorities endorsed Judaism of the Essene type.”

It has to be admitted, however, that, although this approach to early Jewish pseudepigraphy is not uncommon in modern research, it does not appear to be the majority view. Other scholars assume that apocalyptic pseudepigraphy did not intend to deceive its readers. Usually, one of two different justifications is offered for such an assessment. These concern, respectively, the reality of revelatory experiences in apocalyptic literature and the concept of authorship and attribution in apocalyptic writings. As mentioned above, this article treats only the first of these two lines of argument.

**Apocalyptic Pseudepigraphy as Nondeceptive Attribution**

One group of scholars regards apocalyptic pseudepigraphy as nondeceptive because they deem it possible and even probable that the authors of apocalyptic writings wrote their books on the basis of genuine revelatory experiences. This view is held by Sint, Russell, Speyer, and Cohen, who offer different explanations for their thesis that the genuine experience of supernatural revelation precludes the literary deception of one’s readers.

**Vision and Attribution**

Josef Sint assumes on the one hand that apocalyptic books pretended to have been composed long ago by inspired visionaries for future generations. The authors of these pseudepigraphical works used the names of authoritative figures of the past in order to strengthen the authority of their books. On the other hand, according to Sint, the unknown authors who hid behind the pseudepigraphical ascriptions of their works did not intend to deceive their readers but rather used pseudepigraphy as an innocent literary device. Because the apocalyptists usually wrote as truly gifted visionaries from deep religious experience, their books should not be classified as pious frauds. These apocalyptic authors saw no problem with regard to the moral question of truth and therefore had no fear of being exposed.

In line with Sint’s approach is that of Wolfgang Speyer. In his magisterial work on ancient pseudepigraphy, he presupposes that the Jews had, through their contacts with Greek culture in the Hellenistic age, become

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18. Ibid., 75–76.

19. Ibid., 76–77; cf. 86–89.

20. Ibid., 162–63.
acquainted with the concept of intellectual property. Therefore, they were able to produce literary forgeries such as the Letter of Aristeas.\textsuperscript{21} Yet, in contrast to those deceptive works of the Hellenistic era the pseudepigraphical apocalypses of the same period may, according to Speyer, not be classified as deceptive forgeries as long as they were written under pneumatic or charismatic inspiration.\textsuperscript{22} Speyer called books that claimed to have been received by inspiration “religious” or “mythical” pseudepigrapha. If these revelatory claims had grown out of a genuine religious experience of inspiration, we are dealing with “genuine religious pseudepigraphy.”\textsuperscript{23}

According to Speyer, the early Jewish apocalyptists experienced visions just as the old prophets had done. But because they lived in a time period that was generally regarded as post-prophetic, they needed to publish their own visions under the great names of the prophetic past in order gain a hearing. And they did so without being fully aware of the consequences.\textsuperscript{24} Accordingly, an apocalyptic book such as the canonical book of Daniel, which probably was a “genuine religious pseudepigraphon,” should not be regarded as a literary forgery that was designed to deceive its readers.\textsuperscript{25}

\textit{Inspiration, Identification, and Attribution}

David S. Russell’s explanation of apocalyptic pseudepigraphy is more elaborate than the one offered by Sint and Speyer. According to Russell, early Jewish apocalyptists ascribed both their own visions and traditional apocalyptic material to respected ancient prophets without thereby deceiving their audience.\textsuperscript{26} He explained the nondeceptiveness of apocalyptic pseudepigraphy by referring to “a genuine experience of inspiration” and “a genuine sense of tradition.”

By referring to “genuine experiences of inspiration,” Russell expressed his conviction that the apocalyptic authors believed they themselves had been given a genuine revelation by God. In all probability, the apocalyptic writers genuinely felt “possessed” by spiritual forces and were convinced that they were media of divine revelation and had experienced dreams, visions, and auditions, as well as translations into the spirit-world.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{21} Wolfgang Speyer, \textit{Die literarische Fälschung im heidnischen und christlichen Altertum: Ein Versuch ihrer Deutung} (Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft 1/2; Munich: Beck, 1971), 150, 163.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 150–52, 160.
\textsuperscript{24} “Religiöse Pseudepigraphie,” 48–49.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 158–73.
The “genuine sense of tradition,” which Russell ascribed to the early Jewish apocalyptists, consists of three concepts typical of Hebrew psychology, corporate personality, a special time consciousness, and the significance of the proper name. According to Russell, these Hebrew concepts allowed the apocalyptists to identify themselves and their messages with the ancient prophets and their traditions and to identify events of their own time with events of the prophetic past.  

The combination of their experiences of inspiration and their sense of tradition caused the apocalyptists to publish their books pseudonymously but without any intention to deceive. They were not only sure that they had received divine revelations but were at the same time convinced that these revelations were identical to the ones that the ancient prophets had received. An apocalyptic author saw in himself and his own visions a “spiritual reproduction” of an ancient prophet and his visions.  

The early Jewish apocalyptists regarded themselves in equal measure as receivers of actual visions under divine inspiration and as “spokesmen of the seer” and his tradition.  

Possession and Attribution

Along the way, Russell also mentions the possibility that apocalyptists may have been convinced to have received their revelation not from an angel but from the ancient prophet. In accordance with this approach, Naomi Cohen is of the opinion that apocalyptic pseudepigraphy was nondeceptive because it was rooted in enthusiastic experiences of possession. In these experiences, the seer’s personality was temporarily effaced and completely subsumed by an ancient figure such as Enoch or Daniel, whose medium the pseudepigraphical writer became.  

In order to assess the arguments presented above, it will be necessary to take a closer look at the revelatory claims of apocalyptic literature and subsequently at their implications for the authorial attributions in early Jewish apocalypses. This will be done in several steps. First, we will have to reassess the presupposition that the authors of ancient apocalypses did indeed claim to have received supernatural revelations. Accordingly, we will have to review the available internal and external evidence (pp. 73–79). Subsequently, it must be asked how the revelatory claims of the apocalyptists might be accounted for in the light of modern analogies (pp. 79–81). Finally, we will have to discuss if and—as the case may be—how the literary attribution of an apocalyptic text is influenced by the revelatory claim made by its author (pp. 81–91).

29. Ibid., 136.
30. Ibid., 134.
31. Ibid.
Russell, Speyer, and other proponents of the view that apocalyptic pseudepigraphical works were not deceptive because they grew out of genuine religious experiences of the apocalyptists obviously presuppose that apocalyptic books were claiming to deliver divine revelation. This presupposition, however, is not uncontested. According to Richard Bauckham, the apocalyptists presumed that, in their days, the time of original prophetic inspiration had passed. Therefore they regarded their own prophetic inspiration and authority as secondary. Accordingly, they considered their own statements not as new prophetic revelation but rather as interpretation of previously given revelation. The apocalyptists did not want to claim original prophetic legitimation for their books. 33 Brevard Childs applied a similar approach

According to Childs, an informed interpreter will understand that the unknown author of the visions in Dan 7–12 claimed not to offer new prophecies but simply to interpret earlier original prophecies elaborately.34 Because it is impossible to review the revelatory claims of all the ancient Jewish apocalypses in this article, I will focus mainly on one important example of the genre, 1 Enoch (third to first century B.C.). As is well known, the work consists of several parts that can easily be distinguished: the Book of the Watchers (1 En. 1–36), the Book of Parables (1 En. 37–71), the Book of the Luminaries (1 En. 72–82), the Dream Visions (1 En. 83–90), the Epistle of Enoch (1 En. 92–105), the Birth of Noah (1 En. 106–7) and an appendix (1 En. 108). 1 Enoch’s main topic is the coming of God’s judgment to the book of Daniel. According to Childs, an informed interpreter will understand that the unknown author of the visions in Dan 7–12 claimed not to offer new prophecies but simply to interpret earlier original prophecies elaborately.34

FIGURE 2. Allusions to biblical prophecy in 1 Enoch, 4 Ezra, and 2 Baruch.
on the whole human race. This final judgment is announced with prophetic authority. The revelatory claim of this multilayered apocalyptic book can be deduced first from its allusions to biblical prophetic literature (pp. 75) and second from its use of revelatory genres (pp. 76).

Allusions to Biblical Prophecy

1 Enoch opens with words consciously phrased in allusion to the introductory formulas of prophetic statements in the holy Scriptures of Judaism (see fig. 1). The first verses of 1 Enoch (1:1–2) imitate the words that introduce a prophetic utterance made by Moses in Deut 33:1 and an oracle pronounced by Balaam in Num 24:15–16. The passage from Numbers also serves as a model for 1 Enoch’s introduction of the Epistle of Enoch in 1 En. 93:1–3. The allusion to Moses’ final words in Deut 28–33 seems to imply that, in a similar way, 1 Enoch has to be regarded as a testament containing Enoch’s last words, which he uttered shortly before he was removed from the earth.35

The authors of 1 Enoch refer to a threefold source for their book: heavenly visions, words of heavenly figures and the contents of the heavenly tablets. By alluding to the introductory formulas of biblical prophecy, the author(s) of 1 Enoch claimed to speak with the same prophetic authority as Moses and other biblical figures such as Balaam.

The same authorial intention can be demonstrated for other apocalypses (see fig. 2). The manner in which the prophets are introduced in the titles of apocalyptic books clearly implies that the books contain divine revelation. The superscription of the Book of the Similitudes (1 En. 37:1) repeats a statement that can also be found at the beginning of the book of Isaiah. The superscription of 4 Ezra (3:1) identifies the seer or author of the book by means of an allusion to the introduction to the second part of the canonical book of Daniel.36 The superscription of 2 Baruch (1:1) has many close parallels in the introductory sentences of biblical vision reports. And the introductory sentence to the letter of Baruch to the nine and a half tribes (2 Bar. 78:1) alludes clearly to biblical descriptions of the writing activity of Jeremiah’s disciple Baruch.

Superscriptions and introductory formulas like the ones in 1 Enoch, 4 Ezra, and 2 Baruch convey the impression that, just as the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah claim to contain supernatural revelation, so the early Jewish apocalypses claim to speak with supernatural authority. By alluding to the introductory formulas of biblical prophecy, the authors of early Jewish apocalypses claimed to speak with the authority of the biblical prophets Isaiah or Ezekiel.

Use of Revelatory Genres

Beyond the allusions to biblical introductions of prophetic speech, 1 Enoch contains several genres and forms that underscore its prophetic claim to be divine revelation. It contains a prophetic oracle of judgment (1 En. 1–5) that alludes extensively to biblical models and closely resembles passages such as Mic 1:3–4 and Isa 66:15–16 and 65:9–22. It also includes a prophetic-call narrative (1 En. 12–16) with a throne vision comparable to the one related in Ezek 1–2. Large parts of the book consist of visions of cosmic journeys that allow Enoch to see hidden places of the cosmos and are interpreted by accompanying angels (1 En. 17–19, 21–36, 40, 52–54, 60–61, 72–82). 1 Enoch offers dream visions that contain predictions of future events (1 En. 83–84, 85–90). This genre is also part of the biblical Joseph narrative (Gen 37:5–10, 40:1–41:49) and the book of Daniel (2:20–24; 7:15–18, 23–27). All these literary genres clearly contain the claim that the apocalyptic book not only delivers human thoughts and traditions but is also a deposit of heavenly revelation. Obviously, the book’s real author(s) wanted to convey the impression that these revelatory claims were validated by the fact that the history of the Jewish people had developed exactly as predicted.37 The certainty of God’s coming judgment is guaranteed by the book’s claim to present divine revelation.38

EXTERNAL EVIDENCE FOR REVELATORY CLAIMS IN ANCIENT APOCALYPTES

External evidence for 1 Enoch shows how the above mentioned revelatory claims were perceived by the ancient readers of apocalyptic texts (pp. 76–78 below). It is instructive to compare these perceptions with the reception of Dante’s Divine Comedy by medieval readers (pp. 78–79 below).

1 Enoch

As the reception of 1 Enoch in ancient literature demonstrates, the revelatory claims of apocalyptic literature were widely recognized.39 In ancient sources, Enoch is often described as the first person who knew how to write and who wrote his books before the biblical flood.40 In addition to that, in OT, early Jewish, and early Christian tradition, the biblical figure Enoch was regarded as a recipient of heavenly knowledge about the good and evil

38. Ibid., 7.
deeds of every person, who before his death made a heavenly journey, who was taught by angels, received cosmological and astronomical knowledge, and could predict end time events.\textsuperscript{41}

This claim was either accepted or contested. Some ancient authors, like the author of \textit{Jubilees}, the Epistle of Jude, Barnabas, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria, accepted the prophetic authority of \textit{1 Enoch} and sometimes even referred to it as sacred scripture. Two examples must suffice. The book \textit{Jubilees} (second century B.C.) relates:

And in the eleventh jubilee Jared took for himself a wife. . . . And she bore a son for him. . . . And he called him Enoch. . . . \textit{And he saw what was and what will be in a vision of his sleep as it will happen among the children of men in their generations until the day of judgment. He saw and knew everything} and wrote his testimony and deposited the testimony upon the earth against all the children of men and their generations. . . . \textit{And he was therefore with the angels of God six jubilees of years. And they showed him everything which is on earth and in the heavens, the dominion of the sun. And he wrote everything}. . . . And he was taken from among the children of men, and \textit{we led him to the garden of Eden for greatness and honor}. And behold, he is there writing condemnation and judgment of the world, and all of the evils of the children of men. And because of him none of the water of the Flood came upon the whole land of Eden, for he was put there for a sign and so that he might bear witness against all the children of men so that he might relate all of the deeds of the generations until the day of judgment.\textsuperscript{42}

And Tertullian writes:

I am aware that the Scripture of Enoch, which has assigned this order (of action) to angels, is not received by some, because it is not admitted into the Jewish canon either. . . . But since Enoch in the same Scripture has preached likewise concerning the Lord, \textit{nothing at all must be rejected by us which pertains to us}; and we read that “every Scripture suitable for edification is divinely inspired.” By the Jews it may now seem to have been rejected for that (very) reason, just like all the other (portions) nearly which tell of Christ. Nor, of course, is this fact wonderful, that they did not receive some Scriptures which spoke of Him whom even in person, speaking in their presence, they were not to receive. To these considerations is added the fact that Enoch possesses a testimony in the Apostle Jude.\textsuperscript{43}

It is evident that the revelatory claims of apocalyptic books were easily perceived by their ancient readers. The visionary claims made by ancient


\textsuperscript{43} Tertullian, \textit{Cult. fem.} 1.3.1–3 (\textit{ANF} 4:15–16).
apocalyptic texts were either accepted as true or rejected as mere pretentions. But it appears to be impossible to find ancient readers who thought that apocalyptic texts did not at all claim to be reports of actual otherworldly visions. Dissenting remarks, however, can be cited from the recipients of a late medieval apocalypse and may also be of interest in this context.

**Dante’s Divine Comedy**

A famous example of late medieval apocalyptic literature is the *Divine Comedy*, written by the Italian poet Dante Alighieri (A.D. 1265–1321) in the first quarter of the 14th century and drawing strongly on ancient and early medieval apocalyptic and visionary thinking. In it, Dante relates in first-person narrative how he was led by otherworldly characters such as the ancient poet Vergil through hell, purgatory, and paradise. It has been suggested that, apart from the Bible, Dante’s *Comedy* was the most widely read book of the 14th century. Regarding the truth claims made in this visionary report, Dante’s first readers and commentators were divided. On the one hand, readers such as Guido da Pisa and Benvenuto da Imola assumed that Dante’s work was the report of an actual vision of its famous author. A visionary interpretation is still defended by a minority of contemporary literary critics.

On the other hand, several of the earliest commentators, among them Jacopo and Pietro, two sons of Dante, argued strongly that the *Comedy* had to be read as poetic imagination, visionary fiction, and allegorical representation of mental processes that had not grown out of an actual visionary experience of their father. As Pietro Alighieri put it:

> Some things cannot be understood literally, for, taken literally, such things would induce not instruction but error. . . . For what person of sound mind could believe that Dante descended in this way, and saw such things, except allowing for my distinctions among modes of speaking figuratively?

It is interesting to note that Dante himself explicitly agreed with this interpretation in his (probably authentic) 13th letter, in which he wrote that “the form or the mode of treatment” in his *Divine Comedy* was, among others, “poetic” and “fictive.” Yet, as far as the available source texts go, such a

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46. See the short review offered by Buck, “Die Commedia,” 146.
unilateral, figurative approach to an apocalyptic or visionary book seems to have been completely alien to ancient readers of early Jewish apocalypses.

Therefore, internal as well as external ancient evidence suggests that early Jewish apocalypses claimed to be the result of revelatory experiences and that this claim was unanimously recognized by their ancient readers. This presupposition made by the proponents of the concept of "genuine religious pseudepigraphy" can be accepted as firmly grounded in the available textual evidence.

**MODERN EVIDENCE FOR THE GENUINENESS OF REVELATORY CLAIMS**

A further interesting but more difficult question is whether the revelatory claims made by ancient apocalyptists should be regarded as pure inventions or whether they might possibly be rooted in genuine ecstatic experiences of the pseudepigraphical authors of apocalyptic books. As we have seen, some exegetes (most notably Keil) have categorically denied this possibility. Yet, scholars like Michael Stone\(^\text{50}\) consider this last alternative as a serious option. Of particular interest in this regard are the recent examinations by Daniel Merkur (pp. 79–80 below) and Vincente Dobroruka (pp. 80–81 below) who take modern analogies to the revelatory phenomena described in apocalyptic literature into account.

**Psychoanalytical Research**

Daniel Merkur analyzed Jewish apocalypses in the light of psychoanalytical research. He observed that apocalyptic texts often speak about prayer, solitude, fasting, and penitence that precede visionary experiences. "The seers also engaged in exaggerated mourning, which I suggest, was the crucial psychological element of their technique for inducing an alternate psychic state."\(^\text{51}\) The seer may have experienced a bipolar mood swing from depression to elation in which a severe and long-enduring depression that the seer himself had induced by fasting and so on was finally replaced by an ecstatic state. According to Merkur, depression and elation can be regarded as manifestations of the self-critical and self-praising functions of the superego. Merkur interprets the obvious similarities between the contents of different apocalyptic visions as a combination of a seer's actual visionary experiences and his intimate familiarity with older apocalyptic traditions and/or texts.\(^\text{52}\) He concludes that it is untenable that the ancient writers of apocalyptic texts "could have invented a psychological syndrome that anticipated superego theory so very well. The theoretic coherence of

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52. Ibid., 140.
their visionary practice is a testament to its reality.” According to recent psychoanalytical research, apocalyptic vision reports should be interpreted as minimally fictionalized accounts of genuine visionary experiences.

**Automatic Writing**

A different approach has been undertaken by Vincente Dobroruka, who compared pseudepigraphy in apocalyptic literature to the phenomenon of automatic writing (psychography) in order to discover whether apocalyptic pseudepigraphy is related to genuine mystic experiences. He defined automatic writing as “a particular ecstatic state . . . whose main characteristic is the output of a written record.” Dobroruka analyzed this phenomenon in a contemporary religious movement in Brazil called Kardecism. Dobroruka focused his research particularly on one famous Kardecist medium of automatic writing, Chico Xavier, who has produced more than 400 books, including a couple of apocalyptic texts.

After each automatic writing session, Xavier seems to have rewritten and edited the drafts on a typewriter. Xavier considers himself nothing more than a medium who cannot resist the stimulus to write. He feels that the books he has written were not his own, that is, not his intellectual property, but that they were dictated to him by the spirits of deceased persons. Dobroruka compared Xavier’s description of automatic writing to a couple of early Jewish texts on experiences of possession, among them Philo’s report about the production of the Septuagint by 70 translators:

> Sitting here in seclusion . . . they became as it were possessed, and, under inspiration, wrote, not each several scribe something different, but the same word for word, as though dictated to each by an invisible prompter.

On the basis of his research on automatic writing, Dobroruka regards it as possible that Jewish apocalyptic writers had experiences similar to the ones related by Chico Xavier.

*These results from the study of modern psychography,* in addition to the psychoanalytical observations offered by Merkul, make it quite conceivable that at least some of the early Jewish apocalypses reflect genuine revelatory experiences. It can be reasonably assumed that early Jewish apocalyptists not only claimed to have experienced supernatural revelations but were actually able to report about genuine revelatory experiences. Even if this second presupposition made by the proponents of the “genuine religious pseude-
Revelatory Claim and Literary Attribution

The final conclusion drawn by scholars who support the "genuine religious pseudepigraphy" view is that the pseudepigraphical attribution of genuinely revelatory apocalypses did not deceive their readers. In order to assess this claim, it will be necessary to distinguish between different aspects of this claim and to analyze them separately.

The Origin of Content and Record

Speyer presupposed that in antiquity, apart from a few exceptions, pseudepigraphy was regarded as deceptive. This assumption has been confirmed and widely accepted by later research.\(^{60}\) In order to find out whether apocalyptic pseudepigraphy that was rooted in genuine revelatory experiences was deceptive or not, it is first of all necessary to take a closer look at the ancient distinction between pseudonymous and orthonymous texts. In this regard, it is important to bear in mind that this distinction is mainly concerned with the origin of a book’s content.\(^{61}\)

This is evident in ancient letter writing. As is well known, Cicero granted very different degrees of compositional freedom to his secretaries.\(^{62}\) He composed some of his letters by dictating them word for word to a particular secretary. Those letters contained the exact words of their author. Other letters were written differently: Cicero would communicate to the secretary only the basic content or give them a note with catchwords and leave the exact formulation of his thoughts to the secretary. Before sending out these letters, they had to be shown to the author for his final consent. Even those letters that had obviously not been written in the author’s style were not intended by Cicero to deceive their readers. And they were accepted by their readers as authentic letters of Cicero because he was the author of their content.

With regard to other literary genres, the consent of the author was not possible and unnecessary. Particularly illuminating for our purpose are


\(^{61}\) On this, see Baum, *Pseudepigraphie und literarische Fälschung*, 54–63 and passim, as well as the literature mentioned there; cf. also idem, "Zu Funktion und Authentizität der oratio recta: Hebräische und griechische Geschichtsschreibung im Vergleich," *ZAW* 115 (2003): 586–607.

Galen’s judgments about Hippocrates’ books on epidemics. Galen ascribed the first and the third of these books to Hippocrates as their direct author. The composition of books two and six, however, he ascribed to Thessalos, the son of Hippocrates. Yet, according to Galen, Thessalos composed these two books “by collecting everything that his father had written on sheets or slips of parchment or paper.” Therefore, Galen still regarded them as books of Hippocrates, although by calling them “the first and second book of the notes of Hippocrates” Galen distinguished them from the books published by Hippocrates himself. Nevertheless, Hippocrates was deemed the books’ author because he was the author of their content.

The same understanding of authorship and attribution was prevalent in early Christianity. In an often quoted statement, Tertullian (about A.D. 160–220) argues that the Gospels published by Mark and Luke could as well be attributed to the apostles Peter and Paul:

[The Gospel] which Mark published may be affirmed to be Peter’s whose interpreter Mark was. For even Luke’s form of the Gospel men usually ascribe to Paul. And it may well seem that the works which disciples publish belong to their masters.

Tertullian would not have considered the Second and Third Gospels deceptive forgeries if they had been attributed to Peter and Paul, because he regarded Mark and Luke only as publishers of their teachers’ narratives about the life of Jesus.

The same principle forms the basis for Origen’s limited acceptance of the Pauline authorship of the letter to the Hebrews:

If I were to state my opinion, I should say that the thoughts are the apostle’s, but that the style and composition belongs to one who called to mind the apostle’s teachings and, as it were, made short notes of what his master said. If any church, therefore, holds this epistle as Paul’s, let it be commended for this also.

Thus, Origen, like Tertullian, accepted writings as authentic whose content did in fact come from the author to whom they were ascribed, even if the author of their content had not himself composed the book.

In antiquity, therefore, a book was regarded as authentic if its content originated with the person to whom it was ascribed even if this person himself had not recorded or composed it. Further, a book was regarded as pseudonymous if the person to whom it was ascribed had not been the author of its content. Against this conceptual background, it will be possible to evaluate the relation-
ship between revelatory experience and literary attribution in apocalyptic literature further.

Orthonymous Apocalypses from Automatic Writing

In this context, another observation made by Dobroruka becomes relevant. It concerns the literary attribution of the books generated by automatic writing. In Kardecist texts, the identity of mechanical writers (such as Chico Xavier) is always exhibited (see fig. 3). Although Chico Xavier saw himself as nothing more than the medium of the spirits of the deceased, he did not conceal his own name. Accordingly, in Kardecist texts, the revelatory experience is never ascribed to a figure from the remote past.67

As the attribution of the Kardecist apocalyptic books clearly demonstrates, neither the claim of a revelatory experience nor the actual experience of an otherworldly revelation as such make a pseudepigraphical ascription of an apocalyptic text necessary. Genuine revelatory experience does not imply pseudopigraphy. This counts against the explanation of apocalyptic pseudopigraphy offered by Sint and others.

On the other hand, had Xavier published his books under the names of those deceased persons whose spirits dictated his books to him, he would not have deceived his readers because he was firmly convinced that these spirits were the true authors of his books’ content, and he considered himself quite honestly to be merely their secretary or the editor of their messages. And if Xavier had written his books under his own name but without any revelatory experience—which does not seem to have been the case—only his claim for their revelatory content would have been decep-

tive, but not their literary attribution. The only case in which the literary attribution of his book could be considered deceptive would be if Xavier had attributed his books to the spirits of the deceased although its content had not been dictated to him by the spirits but was actually the result of his own reflections (see fig. 4).

**Orthonymous Ancient Apocalypses**

In contrast to the mechanical writers of Kardecist apocalyptic literature, the authors of early Jewish apocalypses not only abstained from mentioning their own names but also ascribed the revelations that they had actually received to ancient biblical figures such as Enoch (see fig. 5). They also attributed the revelatory books which they themselves had written to these biblical prophets. This clearly distinguishes the modern publications of automatic writing from the ancient publication of apocalyptic literature. Whereas in Kardecism apocalyptic texts were published orthonymously, early Jewish apocalypses were usually distributed with pseudepigraphical attributions.

Pseudonymous attribution is also the rule for early Christian books of the same genre such as the *Apocalypse of Peter* from the 2nd century, the (Coptic Gnostic) *Apocalypse of Paul* and the (Coptic Gnostic) *Apocalypse of Peter* from the 3rd century, as well as the *Apocalypse of Paul* and the *Apocalypse of Thomas* from the 4th and 5th centuries A.D. 68

Nevertheless, quite a number of apocalyptic texts were published orthonymously. An early example is Zech 1–8 (particularly, the first-person vision reports in Zech 1:7–6:9), a (proto-)apocalyptic text from about 520 B.C. This text displays the formal features of early Jewish apocalypses (which, like Zech 1–8, were first-person reports about a revelation that is received in a dream or vision and usually mediated by an otherworldly being) and was published under the name of its actual author, Zechariah. 69

We have more orthonymous apocalyptic texts from early Christian literature. At least some of the NT material that, according to Charlesworth, 70 belongs to the apocalyptic genre is not pseudepigraphical. 1 Cor 15 is beyond reasonable doubt orthonymously ascribed to the apostle Paul. And the apocalyptic material in 1 Thess 4 is possibly also not presented pseud-

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onymously. It is, however, doubtful whether these passages actually fit the common definition for the apocalyptic genre that has been adduced above.

A much more obvious example is the Revelation of John, a book that, in terms of genre, is more similar to early Jewish Palestinian apocalypses than any other early Christian text. Like the Similitudes of Enoch (1 En. 37–71), 4 Ezra, and 2 Baruch, the Revelation of John was probably composed toward the end of the 1st century, after the fall of Jerusalem. But in striking contrast to those generically and historically very similar books, this early Christian apocalypse is not pseudepigraphical but was written under the name of its actual author, regardless of whether he was the apostle John or someone else of that name.71 Because the Revelation of John retains the same form of heavenly visions mediated by heavenly visitors as the Jewish apocalypses, its lack of pseudonymity does not prevent the book from being assigned to the genre of apocalyptic literature.72 Rather, the Revelation of John demonstrates that apocalyptic texts that claimed revelatory authority did not have to be published pseudonymously.

The same applies to the Shepherd of Hermas, a Christian apocalypse from the first half of the second century whose author claimed divine authority through his visions73 but, like the author of the Revelation of John, published his work under his own name.74 Whereas some ancient apocalypses

73. Vis. 2.4.3; Mand. 11.
were published pseudonymously, others were distributed with orthonymous attribution.

In order to scrutinize in more detail the conditions under which an ancient apocalypse should be regarded as pseudepigraphical and deceptive, it is necessary to apply the common ancient distinction between the origin of the content and the origin of the record. Figure 6 displays the three basic options for literary attribution if the writing has been done by the apocalyptist and the content is believed to come from an otherworldly being (angel).

First, if an ancient author published his apocalyptic book under his own name, he did not deceive his readers because he had actually written it and did not conceal that most of its content came from the angel who had talked to him during his revelatory experiences. This is what the OT prophet Zechariah and the NT author of the book of Revelation did.

Second, if the ancient apocalyptist ascribed his book to the angel from whom he had received his revelations, this attribution could, according to ancient standards, also be classified as orthonymous and nondeceptive because the apocalyptist was honestly convinced that the angel was the author of his book’s content. These attributions, however, were not customary in ancient Jewish and Christian apocalypses, which were regularly ascribed to human figures.

Third, if an ancient author published his apocalypse under the name of one of the ancient prophets, this attribution had to be classified as pseudonymous and deceptive, even if the book’s content had come from a genuine revelatory experience of its actual (anonymous) author. Because, in this case, the early Jewish apocalypses were attributed to an ancient prophet who, according to the model for apocalyptic experiences we have employed (see fig. 5), could by no means be regarded as the author of the book’s content, these attributions must be considered deceptive in intent.

**Revelatory Claim, Identification, and Literary Attribution**

**Revelation and Identification**

In addition to Sint’s and Speyer’s assumption that the apocalyptist had a genuine revelatory experience, Russell surmises that the apocalyptist so strongly identified himself with an ancient prophet that he was convinced
that the prophet had received the same revelation hundreds or thousands of years ago. On the basis of this model, the assumption that the apocalypticist did not want to deceive his readers becomes much more reasonable for two reasons. First, because the apocalypticist was firmly convinced that he had received a revelation, his claim to publish a revelatory text cannot be regarded as deceptive. Second, because the apocalypticist actually did believe that the ancient prophet to whom he ascribed his book had long ago had the same revelation that he did, it may have been justifiable in his eyes to ascribe his book to the original receiver of the prophecy. In that case, the apocalypticist may have regarded the ancient prophet as the original receiver of the prophecy and himself as a secondary receiver, whose main task it was to write down this very ancient revelation as a secretary (see fig. 7).

The same interpretation applies if the apocalypticist was convinced that, rather than having received the same revelation as one of the biblical prophets long ago, the ancient prophet himself had passed on to the apocalypticist a revelation that he had received in his days (see fig. 8). Also in this case, the apocalypticist could regard himself as nothing more than a secretary whose identity was irrelevant, whereas the real author of the revelation and, therefore, of his book was the ancient prophet. According to this model, the apocalypticist considered the ancient prophet to be the real author of his book’s content and thus ascribed it to him without thereby deceiving his readers. Therefore, up to this point, Russell’s model does indeed succeed in absolving the apocalypticist of the charge of deceit. Nevertheless, his explanation faces critical questions concerning both its compatibility with what is known about the identification of the apocalypticists with the ancient prophets and with the meaning of some statements in the apocalyptic writings about their origin.

The Transmission from Remote Past

Even if we were to concede, for the sake of the argument, that a complete psychological identification between the apocalyptist and the biblical seer was a well-established possibility, Russell’s theory of nondeceptive apocalyptic pseudepigraphy would still not be sustainable. This becomes obvious as soon as we take into account a number of explicit remarks that the apocalyptic books make about their origin. These books ascribed to Enoch and other prophets from biblical times indicate time and again that they had already been composed by the ancient prophets and preserved for the present time through centuries and millennia of transmission. These claims about the origin of the apocalyptic books interfere, as we shall see, with Russell’s theory about the nondeceptive character of early Jewish apocalyptic pseudepigraphy.

In *1 Enoch*, Enoch is summoned to write down the revelations that he had received:

> Then the seven holy ones brought me and placed me on the ground in front of the gate of my house, and said to me, “Make everything known to your son, Methuselah, and show to all your children that no one of the flesh can be just before the Lord; for they are merely his own creation. We will let you stay with your son for one year, so that you may teach your children another law and write it down for them and give all of them a warning; and in the second year, you shall be taken away from (among) all of them.”

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In the next chapter, Enoch himself tells his son Methuselah that he will record the content of his visions and enjoins Methuselah to pass his book on to the next generations for further transmission:

Now, Methuselah, my son, I shall recount all these things to you and write them down for you. I have revealed to you and given you the book concerning all these things. Preserve, my son, the book from your father’s hands in order that you may pass it to the generations of the world. I have given wisdom to you, to your children, and to those who shall become your children in order that they may pass it (in turn) to their own children and to the generations that are discerning.  

A corresponding statement can be quoted from the 2 Enoch, where Enoch is told:

And you take the books which you yourself have written. . . . And you go down onto the earth and tell your sons all that I have told you and everything that you have seen, from the lowest heavens up to my throne. . . . And give them the books in your handwriting, and they will read them and they will acknowledge me as the Creator of everything. And they will understand that there is no other God except myself. And let them distribute the books in your handwriting, children to children and family to family and kinsfolk to kinsfolk. And I will give you, Enoch, my mediator, my archistratig, Michael, on account of your handwritings and the handwritings of your fathers—Adam and Sith and Enos and Kainan and Maleleil and Ared your father. And they will not be destroyed until the final age. So I have commanded my angels, Ariukh and Pariukh, whom I have appointed on earth as their guardians, and I have commanded the seasons, so that they might not perish in the future flood which I shall create in your generation.

Similar remarks about the transmission of prophetic books from the time of their composition by the biblical seers to the present can be found in 4 Ezra, the book of Jubilees, and the Ascension of Moses. It was on the basis of statements such as these that Tertullian devoted a whole chapter to how Enoch’s book could have survived the flood. And Josephus attributed the book of Daniel to the sixth-century biblical prophet because he took remarks such as those quoted above at face value. Obviously, not only from a modern
perspective but already in an ancient context, these statements implied that the books in question had been written down in biblical times.83

Russell does not comment on the tension that exists between these explicit claims and his own model for the literary attribution of the early Jewish apocalypses. Figure 9 visualizes the tension that exists between the explicit claims about the recording of the divine revelation by the biblical prophets in their days and the tacit identification of the apocalyptist with the prophet that Russell assumed in order to absolve the apocalyptic writers from the charge of deceit. The references to the transmission of a book written by Enoch make a visionary experience on the part of the apocalyptist dispensable. If, on the other hand, the apocalyptist wanted to present his book as the result of his own genuine revelatory experience, he should not have claimed that the same book had been transmitted from the remote past.

Hence, even if Russell’s assumption about corporate personality and related concepts stood on firm ground, the apocalyptist’s statements about the origin of his book would not be free of deceptive intent. The apocalyptist answered his readers’ question about the origin of his book not by presenting himself as the spiritual secretary of an angel or one of the ancient prophets but by claiming that the book had been written hundreds or thousands of years ago by the ancient prophet himself.84 By claiming

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that his book had been transmitted from the remote past, the apocalyptist deceived his audience about the fact that he had in fact written it down. *By attributing the writing of their books to ancient seers, the apocalyptists wanted to deceive their audience—not necessarily about the revelatory content of their books but very specifically about the books’ historical origin.* Therefore, even Russell’s elaborate explanation of apocalyptic pseudepigraphy cannot clear the anonymous apocalyptists of the charge that they deceived their audience about the actual origin of their books.

**CONCLUSION**

Regarding our initial question about the deceptive intent of pseudepigraphy in early Jewish apocalypses, our analysis of the relationship between revelatory claims and literary attribution has led to the following results.

1. In contrast to, for instance, Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, early Jewish apocalypses claimed to contain the content of revelatory experiences. This is evident from the allusions to the opening words of biblical prophetic books and from the use of revelatory genres such as call narratives, dream reports, or vision reports. These revelatory claims were widely perceived as such by ancient readers of apocalyptic texts (pp. 73–79).

2. As far as ancient evidence and modern analogies go, at least some authors of pseudepigraphical apocalypses may have been honestly convinced that they were actually presenting more than human dreams and messages. According to modern evidence from psychoanalysis and automatic writing, some apocalyptists might have been convinced that they had experienced a supernatural disclosure of heavenly realities in a particular ecstatic state. Therefore, these authors could not be accused of claiming prophetic authority for their texts without actually having had revelatory experiences (pp. 79–81).

3. The admittedly plausible assumption that at least some apocalyptic texts originated from genuine ecstatic experiences does not, however, offer any reason to suppose that their literary attributions were not measured against the generally accepted ancient standards. The two questions whether an author has reported about a genuine revelatory experience and whether the attribution of his text is correct or not have to be strictly distinguished. The main ancient criterion for deceptive and nondeceptive literary attribution was whether a book’s content actually came from the person under whose name it had been published. Apocalyptic texts such as Zech 1–8, Revelation, or the *Shepherd of Hermas* that were ascribed to the human receiver of a message from an angel were not intended to deceive because the persons to whom they were ascribed were the actual composers of their books. If, however, an author who was honestly convinced that he had received much of his book’s content from an angel published this apocalyptic text under the name of an ancient prophet, an attribution such as this was, according to ancient standards, deceptive because there
was no justification for tracing its content back to the biblical prophet (pp. 81–86).

4. A superior model of nondeceptive apocalyptic pseudepigraphy was developed mainly by David Russell. He suggested that the apocalyptic author who wrote on the basis of a genuine revelatory experience and ascribed his book to one of the biblical prophets did not thereby wish to deceive his readers because he strongly identified himself with the prophet. From the perspective of the apocalyptist, the book’s content could therefore actually be traced back to the biblical seer. Yet, by attributing not only the content but also the recording of their apocalyptic books to ancient seers and by explicitly claiming that their books had been carefully transmitted from the remote times of the biblical prophets to the present, the apocalyptic authors clearly intended to deceive their readers about the true origin of their books (pp. 86–91).

5. In light of the above considerations, the remaining alternative for the early Jewish apocalyptists appears to have been a very simple one. After the apocalyptic seer came to himself from his genuine visionary experience, he had to decide what to do with the report written during this experience. He could either publish it under his own name (as Zechariah, John, and Hermas did) or publish it under the name of an ancient prophet (as Pseudo-Enoch, Pseudo-Ezra, and Pseudo-Paul did). If the apocalyptist published his book orthonymously under his own name, he did not intend to deceive anybody. But if he ascribed it to one of the biblical prophets, he thereby sought to misinform his audience about the actual historical origin of his apocalyptic texts. The decision as to whether an apocalyptic text was published orthonymously or pseudonymously was apparently made for reasons that were not immediately connected to the revelatory experiences of its author.

As a matter of course, the much broader question as to whether, apart from a genuine revelatory experience, there may have been other historical or literary factors that distinguished literary attribution in apocalyptic literature from literary attribution in nonapocalyptic texts (see pp. 65–67 above) has not been part of this article and must be dealt with in an extra study.