

# INTRODUCTION TO NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS OF UNDETERMINED, DOUBTFUL, OR SPURIOUS AUTHENTICITY

What now follows is a collection of New Testament writings, which at some point have been quoted by various early pre-Nicene<sup>1</sup> (that is, pre-325AD) as an authoritative work, but of whose authenticity remains undetermined, doubtful, or certainly spurious. Of these writings, only the text of the works which have 'undetermined' authenticity (with the exception of the Teaching) have been included. This choice has been made, both due to the lack of space, and to avoid the possibility of events from spurious writings, which are very close in nature to the authentic New Testament writings, from being confused in the reader's mind. Therefore, the omitted writings will be briefly summarized below. Now since the authenticity these writings remains undeterminable, the reader should not use these writings for doctrinal purposes, but they should be consigned to this section awaiting a further development of information to bring about a conclusive judgment to either their spuriousness or legitimacy. The writings contained here are:

## PREACHING OF PETROS

Only fragments of this writing remain, mostly as quotations by Clemens of Alexandria (190AD, who held it as an authentic writing of the emissary Petros) and once authoritatively by Apollōnios of about the same period. It was put into the spurious, but not heretical, books by Eusebios (325AD), and shortly thereafter seems to have went out of circulation.

## REVELATION OF PETROS

This writing exists fully-extant in an Ethiopic translation, and minutely in several Greek and Latin fragments. This book is listed in the earliest extant list of books of the New Testament canon (~200AD). It is quoted several times by Clemens of Alexandria (190AD) as an authentic canonical book; also, when doing his commentaries on all of the New Testament books, this book was included. Hippolytos (225AD), while not quoting from it directly, definitely was influenced by it several times in his discourses on the Netherworld and Tartaros. A pagan (270AD), when attacking the Christians, frequently quotes from the Christians' writings. One of these writings is the Revelation of Petros, which he quotes from twice, as being part of the writings which his Christian opponents consider authoritative. Methodios (300AD) quotes from it once with the words "we have received in god-spirited writings." Eusebios (325AD) classifies it among the spurious, though not heretical, works. It seems to quickly have gone out of circulation after this, and only exists afterward in a couple scattered quotations.

## TEACHING (DIDACHE)

The Teaching is the only writing included in this collection which has already been judged to be non-inspired or non-authoritative. It has been retained here solely for historical sake and should not be used by anyone for any reason in the formation of doctrine. While this is an authentic writing (as in, it is not a writing forged in the name of an emissary or such), it seems to be merely some sort of early ordinance for a local assembly by an unknown author. Its non-authoritativeness should be obvious to any reader by its legalistic tendency. It seems to have received a single quotation from Clemens of Alexandria (190AD). Eusebios (325AD) is the next witness, who places it among the spurious, but not heretical, works. It receives a more positive response by Athanasios (367AD), who thinks that it is good for encouragement, but not to be placed among the canonical works. However, his near contemporary, Didumos, considers it canonical. Due to its apparent acceptance by some groups, some later heretics enlarged the work tremendously, and turned it into some forgery in the name of the twelve emissaries, trying to gain credibility for their false teachings under the name of "Apostolic Constitutions." Nevertheless, the lack of pre-Nicene Christian testimony and internal evidence easily condemn it outside anything orthodox and certainly outside the canon.

## UNIDENTIFIED QUOTATIONS

This is a collection of quotations by early Christian writers from books (either Old or New Testament) of whose source is currently unknown.

<sup>1</sup> Pre-Nicene seems to be a good cut-off point. If the writing has escaped the testimony of the first 325 years of the church, it is almost certainly unlikely to be authentic. How could such a thing remain unheard of for so long? Where would it have come from?

Now what follows, are brief notices of the other writings, which were held by a few early Christians writers as authentic, but have been judged to be manifestly spurious and should not be used under any circumstances:

## GOOD-MESSAGE ACCORDING TO THE HEBREWS

The contents of this writing are only known from various quotations of early Christian writers, usually quoted in a negative or neutral sense. Clemens of Alexandria (190AD) quotes it twice when refuting heretics (probably using their own writings against them), and Origenes (250AD) four times as an additional source but not authoritative, and Jerome (400AD) sometimes seemingly more out of curiosity. The only one who may to quote it in a positive sense is Hegeppus (125AD) (but his writings are only known in summary form and brief quotations, so the context and his personal reception of the writing is unknown), and certain heretical Hebrew groups who usually rejected the rest of the New Testament writings. Eusebios (325AD) states that some classify this writing among the holy writings, but he himself places it in the spurious, though not heretical group. Now although Clemens of Alexandria, and Origenes, and Eusebios, and Jerome at times quote from this writing (very sparingly that is) they all clearly testify to the fact that there are *only* four Good-Messages. Therefore, since the early Christian writers who make any sort of quotation from this work also state that there are only four Good-Messages, there can be nothing but confidence that they did not hold this writing to be authentic, and we can safely do the same. Therefore, with an exception of possibly Hegeppus (who may be part of the same heretical Hebrew sect which used this writing), there are no orthodox writers that ever quote from this positively or as an authentic or authoritative source. The surviving quotations of this work demonstrate a Good-Message which is similar in nature to that of Maththai, but which has wide divergences, several of very questionable nature. Due to the lack of positive testimony by all early writers except possibly one, it is clear that this book is spurious.

## ACTS OF PAULUS

Of the ancients, the only writers who reference this writing are Hippolytos (once, as if his readers obviously considered it authentic, 200AD), and Origenes (twice, 200AD), and perhaps once by Commodianus (240AD). Fortunately, Tertullianus (200AD) preserves for us the fact that it was refuted as a forgery:

If those who read *the* writings which falsely bear *the* name of Paulus adduce the example of Thecla to maintain *the* right of women to teach and to immerse, let them know that *the* elder in Asia who produced this document (as if he could of himself add anything to *the* prestige of Paulus) was removed from his office after he had been convicted and had confessed that he did it out of love of Paulus.

It appears that action was taken, and this writing was quickly discredited, as there is no mention of it again by any Christian writer again until Eusebios (325AD, who places it into the spurious, though not heretical, works), and Jerome (400AD, who repeats the same information as Tertullianus). After this, it is neglected from that time forward among the Greek and Latin Christians except for a couple extremely minor notices. However, major notices are its inclusion in the canonical list inserted into the Greek Codex Claromontanus bible (550AD), and the ancient Syrian Christians using the fictitious 3 Korinthians extracted from it, which gradually lost its canonical status among them by the 5<sup>th</sup> century. A quick read through the book reveals its blatant spuriousness and its non-Pauline character, including strange doctrines about celibacy which are in complete contradiction to what he writes elsewhere. This is definitely not the same Paulus who wrote the letters which are authentically recognized as his, and this book is easily and without doubt condemned.

## LETTER OF PAULUS TO THE LAODIKEANS

This letter, which is considered by all scholars to be a clumsy forgery, is merely a short compilation of verses from other Pauline letters, with the intent to supply a missing letter to the Laodikeans suggested by his Letter to the Kolossians (4:16). This letter has absolutely no pre-Nicene (325AD) testimony and there is no evidence of a Greek text. Jerome (400AD), who composed the Latin Vulgate translation of the bible and did not include this letter, is the earliest witness to the existence of this text, where he writes, "Some also read a letter to *the* Laodikeans, but it is rejected by everyone." However, some later Latin Vulgate versions (500-1100AD) did include this letter for a time, while it has never appeared in any Greek or Syriac or any other versions of the bible. There is no reason to even bring this letter into serious consideration for authenticity.

## CORRESPONSE OF PAULUS AND SENECA

This collection of letters between Paulus and Seneca is universally declared to be one of obvious forgeries. The poverty of thought and style, and the errors in chronology and history, and the whole conception of the relative positions of Seneca and Paulus clearly betray the hand of a forger. They are not mentioned by

any pre-Nicene writers (325AD) and seem to be first mentioned by Jerome (400AD), who writes, "Letters from Paulus to Seneca and from Seneca to Paulus which are very widely read." Despite this, there is an absolute absence of quotations from them. Therefore, independently of the unbroken silence of 350 years about this correspondence and their internal evidence alone is sufficient to condemn them.

#### **SECOND LETTER OF CLEMENS TO THE KORINTHIANS**

This letter is said to have been written by Clemens of Roma, who wrote the authentic Letter to the Korinthians in about 90AD. There are no pre-Nicene (325AD) references to this document at all. When writing in 325AD, Eusebios states, "But it must be observed that there is also a certain so-called second letter of Clemens. But we do not know that this is recognized like the former, for we do not find that the ancients have made any use of it." His opinion is followed by Jerome (400AD), "A second letter is also ascribed to his [Clemens'] name, which has not been accepted by *the* ancients." There are no known quotations from it even after Nicene. However, it should be noted that it is included in the Greek Codex Alexandrinus (c. 400~450AD, the only single bible manuscript containing it) and is also considered part of the canonical list of books in the Pseudo-Apostolic Constitutions (c. 350AD, which, being itself a blatant forgery, cannot be taken as any serious testimony). In addition to its lack of testimony by Christian writers, internal testimony itself condemns it, with its positive usage of quotations from false gnostic writings. It should also be noted that there are many additional post-Nicene writings forged under the name of Clemens, to which not even the most-minuet consideration can be attached to them being non-heretical.