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ARTICLE

Eusebius and the Biographical Logic of the New Testament Canon

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Abstract

Eusebius' much-discussed catalogue of 'acknowledged', 'disputed' and 'spurious' works (*Historia Ecclesiastica* 3.25) is a key passage in the history of New Testament canon formation, but it is often extracted from its literary context and consequently misunderstood. This passage is in fact a summary of conclusions that Eusebius has already reached in the contributions to apostolic biography with which he supplements the Book of Acts in *HE* 2.1–3.24. Biographical passages relating the conclusion of the apostolic lives of James, Peter, Paul and John are accompanied by statements about the texts they authored or authorised, or that have been falsely attributed to them. This biographical context for differentiating genuine works of prestigious figures from their pseudepigraphal counterparts has its roots in Greco-Roman literary culture, as exemplified in the *Lives of the Philosophers* of Diogenes Laertius. Eusebius' crucial contribution to the formation of the New Testament canon is thus rooted not in exclusively Christian concerns but in the wider literary culture of Late Antiquity.

Keywords: biography; canon; pseudonymity; Eusebius; Diogenes Laertius; Greek philosophy

1. Introduction

With good reason, Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* is fundamental to every attempt to retrace the history of the New Testament 'canon' – the list that represents its table of contents. In the *Historia*, Eusebius presents his own lists of texts that should and should not be included, supplemented by lists laboriously compiled from the work of earlier Christian authors such as Irenaeus, Clement and Origen, derived from their explicit statements and citation practices.[1] What is often overlooked is the context within Eusebius' work in which questions

[1] Singular or tabulated lists are a key part of Eusebius' legacy. As Martin Wallraff states: 'Im "Kanon" fand er [Euseb von Kaisareia] geradezu einen Leitbegriff seiner wissenschaftlichen Tätigkeit. In ganz unterschiedlichen Zusammenhängen kam er immer wieder darauf zurück – *nota bene:* in einer Zeit, in der der Bezug auf die Schrift noch nicht belegt und wohl auch nicht vorhanden war' (*Kodex und Kanon: Das Buch im frühen Christentum* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013) 29). Wallraff has in mind the synchronised lists of events in various national histories (book 2 of Eusebius's *Chronicon*), a tabulated listing of the Psalms by their respective authors, the 'canon tables' or co-ordinated lists that analyse the relationships between the canonical gospels, and finally the listing of books included in the New Testament (30–7). 'Canon' in this last sense is attested in *HE* 6.25.3, though here the connotation of 'rule' is also present.

of canonical status and pseudepigraphy first arise. That context is apostolic biography – specifically, biographical material relating to the conclusion of apostolic lives whether in martyrdom (James, Peter, Paul) or in old age (John). In this paper, I shall argue (1) that the biographical context of Eusebius' statements about authorship and pseudepigraphy is integral to his project of canon formation; and (2) that Eusebius' correlation of biography and authorship is rooted in Greco-Roman literary culture, specifically its tradition of highly individualised profiles of biographical subjects. The concern here is with the origins of the New Testament itself – the entire canonical collection rather than its sub-collections or individual writings. The New Testament collection does not evolve out of any exclusively Christian necessity or teleology.[2] Rather, it is enabled and shaped by Greco-Roman literary traditions.[3]

Demonstrating the Eusebian link between canonical texts and apostolic biography is not difficult, as it is immediately evident from the relevant passages in books 2 and 3 of the *Historia*. In each case, an account of the end of an apostolic life is followed by a discussion of the authentic or pseudonymous texts that the figure in question either did or did not author. The question is why this link has not been more widely noted, and the explanation seems to lie in a misunderstanding of the much-discussed passage in book 3 chapter 25, where Eusebius lists his *homologoumena, antilegomena* and *notha* – the 'acknowledged' books that make up his proposed New Testament together with the 'disputed' and 'spurious' books that are to be excluded.[4] What is overlooked when this passage is isolated from its context is that it is a summary of positions already established towards the end of book 2 and in the earlier part of book 3. Eusebius states this explicitly as he prepares to present his lists: 'At this point it is appropriate to sum up [ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι] the previously-mentioned texts of the New Testament [τὰς δηλωθείσας τῆς καινῆς διαθήκης γραφάς].'[5] Eusebius here summarises what he has already discussed at length. A summary is not a substitute for the main argument. If the summary is read in isolation from its wider context, misunderstandings are likely to arise.

[2] According to Harry Y. Gamble, 'the eventual development of a canon of authoritative writings' was 'inherent in the very nature of Christianity', given its orientation to 'the period of revelation' (*The New Testament Canon: Its Making and Meaning* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) 58). The suggestion here of historical inevitability has no justification.

[3] It is these literary traditions that are decisive rather than fourth-century politics. I see no evidence that decisions about the scriptural canon were reached 'under the guidance of the highest levels of the Roman government' and, indeed, were influenced by Constantine himself (David L. Dungan, *Constantine's Bible: Politics and the Making of the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007) 3, 118). When Constantine commissioned Eusebius to produce 'fifty books [σωμάτια] of the holy scriptures, the provision and use of which you know to be necessary for the teaching of the church' (*Vit. Const.* 4.36), he gives no instruction about the contents of these books.

[4] Edmon L. Gallagher and John D. Meade note that at *HE* 3.25 Eusebius 'tries to offer a coherent discussion of the entire NT canon…, where he categorizes the books of the New Testament canon according to their level of acceptance' (*The Biblical Canon Lists from Early Christianity: Texts and Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) 104). Excerpting this passage (and others related to it) results in a neglect of critical questions about Eusebius' wider argumentative strategy. Eusebius' pervasive influence over histories of the New Testament canon is illustrated by Westcott's presentation of late second–third century 'testimonies' under the Eusebian rubrics of 'acknowledged', 'disputed', and 'heretical and apocryphal' books (B. F. Westcott, *A General Survey of the Canon of the New Testament* (London: Macmillan, 1875[4]) 333–404). Also profoundly Eusebian is the claim that the New Testament canon is already fixed in Irenaeus, bar a few details; so H. von Campenhausen, *The Formation of the Christian Bible* (Eng. tr. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 203; Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987) 155; cf. *HE* 4.8.1.

[5] *HE* 3.25.1.

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2. Biography and Authorship

In book 2 of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Eusebius creates a supplement to the Acts of the Apostles, which – unlike the 'apocryphal' apostolic acts literature – treats the Lukan text as a template for the additional material presented.[6] The book opens with summaries of the Acts narratives of the selection of Matthias in place of Judas Iscariot, the appointment of seven deacons and the martyrdom of Stephen.[7] In subsequent chapters, reference is made to the worldwide famine foretold by the prophet Agabus,[8] the martyrdom of the apostle James,[9] Peter's angelic release from prison[10] and Paul's unhindered preaching in Rome with which the Book of Acts concludes.[11] Eusebius also provides supplementary traditions about minor characters from Acts, such as Simon Magus,[12] the Ethiopian eunuch,[13] Herod Agrippa,[14] Theudas,[15] the unnamed Egyptian rebel[16] and the Roman governor Felix.[17] Like Acts, the *Historia Ecclesiastica* can plausibly be seen as a work of 'collected biography'.[18]

In several cases, Eusebius' supplementary material serves only to confirm the veracity of the Acts narrative but otherwise contributes little to his construction of an 'apostolic age'. More important is his supplementary biographical material about key apostolic figures at points where Acts is silent. An ancient biography would normally conclude with an account of its subject's death, yet the Acts narrative leaves Paul in Rome with his fate still undecided. The Petrine biographical material in the first part of the book is still more truncated: Peter makes a brief final appearance at the council in Jerusalem,[19] and nothing is said of his arrival and activity in Rome or its outcome. These are not insignificant omissions.[20] According to tradition, both Paul and Peter were martyred in Rome, and the death of martyrs is the crowning moment of their lives.[21] Acts remains silent about these iconic events, so Eusebius has to conclude that it was composed before they took place.[22] To fill the

[6] On the relationship between Acts and its apocryphal counterparts, see François Bovon, 'Canonical and Apocryphal Acts of Apostles', *JECS* 11 (2003) 165–94.

[7] *HE* 2.1; cf. Acts 1.12–26; 6.1–6; 7.54–60.

[8] *HE* 2.8.1–2, 12.1–3; cf. Acts 11.27–30.

[9] *HE* 2.9.1–3; cf. Acts 12.1–2.

[10] *HE* 2.9.4; cf. Acts 12.3–19.

[11] *HE* 2.22.1; Acts 28.30–1.

[12] *HE* 2.1.10–12, 11.1–3, 13.1–15.1; cf. Acts 8.9–24.

[13] *HE* 2.1.13; cf. Acts 8.26–40.

[14] *HE* 2.10.1–10; cf. Acts 12.1, 20–3.

[15] *HE* 2.11.1–3; cf. Acts 5.34–6.

[16] *HE* 2.21.1–3; cf. Acts 21.8.

[17] *HE* 2.19.2–21.3; cf. Acts 23.23–24.27.

[18] See Sean A. Adams, *The Genre of Acts and Collected Biography* (SNTS Monographs, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); James Corke-Webster, *Eusebius and Empire: Constructing Church and Rome in the* Ecclesiastical History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 72–9 and *passim*.

[19] Acts 15.7–11.

[20] The problem is highlighted by Daniel Marguerat, who devotes an excursus to the question, 'Pourquoi Luc ne raconte-t-il la fin du Paul?' (*Les Actes des Apôtres* (Commentaire du Nouveau Testament; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2015) 2.388–9). According to Marguerat (citing 1 Clement 5.2 and 2 Timothy 4.16), Luke may be covering up the fact that Paul had not received support from Christians in Rome (389). For a fuller account see Daniel Marguerat, 'On why Luke Remains Silent about Paul's End (Acts 28, 16–31)' in *The Last Years of Paul* (ed. John Barclay, Armand Puig I Tarrech, Jörg Frey; WUNT; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015) 305–32.

[21] The deaths of Peter and Paul are noted in 1 Clement 5.2–7, and the contrast with Acts' silence is striking, especially if the two texts were written at approximately the same time. However, the traditional late first-century dating of 1 Clement becomes questionable if this text is viewed as 'a historical fiction', 'a form of pseudepigraphon' which 'maps a new epistolary scenario on the authoritative framework of 1 Corinthians', as argued by Clare Rothschild, *New Essays on the Apostolic Fathers* (WUNT; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017) 66–7.

[22] Eusebius' dating of Acts is echoed by conservative commentators such as F. F. Bruce, who suggests that Acts was written shortly before the Neronian persecution of 64 CE and addressed to Theophilus as 'a representative

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gap, he pieces together an account of Paul's last years based on passages from 2 Timothy 4: Paul was initially released by Nero and embarked on a further period of missionary activity before returning to Rome, where he was re-tried and beheaded.[23] In the case of Peter, Eusebius is dependent on the Acts of Peter for the dramatic story of the apostle's journey to Rome to confront Simon the heresiarch and of his death by crucifixion.[24]

Eusebius identifies a further lacuna in Acts' cursory treatment of James the brother of the Lord, referred to in passing just three times.[25] According to tradition, James is the first bishop of Jerusalem, one of four cities – along with Rome, Antioch and Alexandria – whose episcopal succession (διαδοχή) Eusebius will record as his narrative proceeds, together with the succession of Roman emperors. James is foundational to the church of Jerusalem as Peter and Paul are to the church of Rome, and he, too, ends his life as a martyr. Eusebius finds biographical material about James in the *Hypotyposes* of Clement of Alexandria, who states that 'after the resurrection the Lord gave the tradition of knowledge to James the Just and John and Peter', who passed it on to the other apostles, and that 'after the ascension of the Saviour Peter and James and John… chose James the Just as bishop of Jerusalem'.[26] Clement and Eusebius go on to explain that there were two martyred Jameses (Ἰάκωβοι), one of whom was beheaded (James the brother of John), while the other (James the Just, brother of the Lord) was 'thrown down from the pinnacle of the temple and beaten to death with a fuller's club'.[27] Clement here summarises the story of James' martyrdom as told by Hegesippus, and Eusebius will later quote at length from Hegesippus' vivid account (ὑπόμνημα) of the life and death of James the Just.[28] Eusebius concludes:

> James was so remarkable a man, celebrated by all for his righteousness, that the wise among the Jews thought that this was the cause of the siege of Jerusalem immediately after his martyrdom, and that this happened solely because of the crime they had committed against him.[29]

It is in this biographical context that reference is made to the issue of authorship:

> Such are the facts concerning James, to whom is ascribed the first of the so-called Catholic Epistles [τῶν ὀνομαζομένων καθολικῶν ἐπιστολῶν]. It should be regarded as spurious [νοθεύεται], as not many of the early writers mention it. This is also the case with the supposed letter of Jude, which is again one of the seven called 'Catholic'. Nevertheless, we recognise that these too are in public use along with the others in the majority of churches.[30]

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of the intelligent reading public (or rather listening public) of Rome' (*The Book of Acts* (New London Commentary; London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1954) 23). One of several reasons for discounting this scenario is Luke's likely dependence not only on Mark but also on Josephus' *Antiquities*, as argued by Steve Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2005[2]) 251–95.

[23] *HE* 2.22.1–8, 2.25.5–8.

[24] *HE* 2.13.1–15.1, 2.25.5–8.

[25] Acts 12.17, 15.13–21, 21.18.

[26] *HE* 2.1.3–4.

[27] *HE* 2.1.5.

[28] *HE* 2.23.4–18. On early James traditions, see *James the Just and Christian Origins* (ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans; NovTSupp 98; Leiden: Brill, 1999); John Painter, *Just James: the Brother of Jesus in History and Tradition* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999).

[29] *HE* 2.23.19.

[30] *HE* 2.23.24–5.

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Three important points arise from this passage. First, Eusebius' negative assessment of the Letters of James and Jude requires him to reject not just individual texts but a well-established and clearly defined collection that has acquired its own conventional title, the 'Catholic Epistles'.[31] Second, Eusebius rejects these texts on the grounds that their composition, their incorporation into a collection and their widespread usage must all be recent – on the assumption that key earlier writers such as Irenaeus would have mentioned and cited them had they been available to them. Pseudepigraphy is established not from the unobjectionable contents of these texts but from the lack of a credible *terminus ante quem*. Third, it is the biographical context that makes the issue of pseudepigraphy relevant. When passages from the Letter of James are read and heard in public worship or instruction, the authorial persona is a construct of the text itself: the name 'James' is given at the outset and serves to identify the guarantor of the text's single origin and coherence. Here, the author exists only in the service of the text: that 'James' means James is a tautology. In contrast, biography is concerned with an entire human life, its beginning and end and the significant actions and events that occur along the way. If the actions of the biographical subject include the authoring of texts, then that fact may be noted. If, however, a text appears to have been mistakenly or falsely ascribed to the biographical subject, then the biographer is obliged to correct this error along with any other points where the life in question has been misrepresented. It is biography that makes the exposure of pseudonymity possible and necessary.

So James does not feature in Eusebius' pioneering blueprint for an authoritative collection of apostolic texts – a 'New Testament'.[32] Remarkably, the entire proposed collection is associated with just four apostolic individuals, whether as authoring texts themselves or as sanctioning the compositions of their followers. Those four are Matthew, Peter, Paul, and John, with Peter as guarantor of Mark and Paul as guarantor of Luke-Acts and Hebrews.[33] Thus, Peter's preaching gives rise to the Gospel of Mark[34], while Paul can speak of the Gospel of Luke as 'my gospel'.[35] Like the real author of the pseudonymous Letter of James, Eusebius establishes textual authority by exploiting the prestige of apostolic names. Of his four apostolic authors or guarantors of New Testament texts, Eusebius leaves only Matthew in relative obscurity; otherwise, it is apostolic biography that provides the context for authorship issues. Biography links Peter to Mark and Paul to Luke, thereby establishing the Gospels attributed to Mark and Luke as authentically apostolic. Biography provides an occasion in the life of the aged apostle John that accounts for his belated decision to write what he remembered. Conversely, it is biography that breaks the forged links between

[31] On the significance of the Catholic Epistles collection for the process of canon formation, see Kelsie Rodenbiker, *Scriptural Figures and the Fringes of the New Testament Canon* (Oxford: OUP, forthcoming).

[32] In describing Eusebius' New Testament as 'pioneering', I pass over the question of the date of the Muratorian fragment. For contrasting assessments, see Joseph Verheyden, 'The Canon Muratori: A Matter of Dispute', in *The Biblical Canons* (ed. J. W. Auwers and H. J. de Jonge, BETL, Leuven: Peeters, 2003) 487–556; Clare Rothschild, *The Muratorian Fragment: Text, Translation, Commentary* (STAC, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022). For Verheyden, 'The [2nd century] dating on the basis of the Shepherd and the reference to Pius remain crucial' (556), while for Rothschild 'the Muratorian Fragment is a layered writing redacted from several sources, primarily biblical prologues, in the late fourth century, in northern Italy, by Ambrosiaster or someone who knew his works' (344).

[33] Eusebius reports that Hebrews was rejected by the Church of Rome as not being an authentic work of Paul (*HE* 3.3.5; 6.20.3), but finds citations in Irenaeus (*HE* 5.26.1) and in Clement (*HE* 6.13.6), who understands it as a work of Paul written anonymously in Hebrew and translated into Greek by Luke (*HE* 6.14.2–4). Origen's doubts about the authorship are cited at some length (*HE* 6.25.11–14). See Clare Rothschild, *Hebrews as Pseudepigraphon: The History and Significance of the Pauline Attribution of Hebrews* (WUNT, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009).

[34] *HE* 2.14.1–2.

[35] *HE* 3.4.7, cf. Rom 2.16, 16.25; 2 Tim 2.8.

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the apostolic name and the pseudepigraphal text. Bibliography is incorporated into biography.[36]

Eusebius' contributions to the biography of Peter occur at intervals throughout book 2 of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* and at the start of book 3, and they are derived from a variety of sources: Clement of Alexandria, Papias, Justin, Philo, Caius of Rome and (unacknowledged) the Acts of Paul, in addition to Acts itself and 1 Peter. Peter belongs to the privileged group of three who receive the gift of knowledge (γνῶσις) from the risen Lord and impart it to the other apostles.[37] After Jesus' departure, Peter participates in the appointment of James the Just as bishop of Jerusalem.[38] In Samaria he has an initial encounter with Simon the magician, who flees to Rome to practise his magical arts there.[39] After being released from prison by an angel, Peter pursues Simon to Rome and brings the arch-heretic's career and life to an end.[40] More importantly, Peter 'brought from the east to the west the precious cargo of the spiritual light, the light itself and the word that saves souls, preaching the gospel [τὸ κήρυγμα… εὐαγγελιζόμενος] of the kingdom of heaven'.[41] Enthused by his preaching, Peter's hearers secretly persuade his follower Mark to put it into writing, and Peter approves this venture when alerted to it by the Spirit, recommending that the so-called Gospel according to Mark – in reality the Petrine Gospel – be publicly read in the churches.[42] Eusebius reports the traditions that, during the reign of Claudius, Philo travelled from Alexandria to Rome to meet Peter, while Mark later made the same journey in the opposite direction.[43] Peter endorses Mark in his first (and only authentic) letter, where he is referred to as 'my son Mark' and where Rome is characterised as 'Babylon'.[44] From the opening of the same letter, Eusebius concludes that Peter must have preached to the Jews of the Dispersion in regions in and around Asia at some point before his journey to Rome, where he was finally crucified – head downwards at his own request.[45] He was buried in the Vatican, where his tomb may still be seen.[46]

Having concluded his account of the life and death of Peter, Eusebius proceeds to cull the many texts that circulate under Peter's name, reducing them to just one:

> A single letter of Peter is acknowledged [ἀνωμολόγηται], the one called his first, and this the early presbyters treated as undisputed [ὡς ἀναμφιλέκτῳ] in their own writings. But the so-called Second Letter we have not received as canonical [ἐνδιάθηκον], although it has seemed useful to many and is studied alongside the other scriptures. But as for the Acts that go by his name, the Gospel named after him, the Kerygma attributed to him and the so-called Apocalypse, we have absolutely no knowledge

[36] This correlation of biography and bibliography applies throughout the *Historia*, not just in connection with the New Testament writings. Thus bibliographies of Origen's works are included within the extensive biography that occupies much of book 6: the *Hexapla* and *Tetrapla* (*HE* 6.16.3–4); commentaries produced in Alexandria (6.24.1–3) and in Caesarea (6.32.1–2); the *Contra Celsum*, further commentaries and letters (6.36.1–4). On Eusebius' Origen biography in relation to the Greco-Roman biographical tradition, see Christoph Markschies, *Origenes und sein Erbe: Gesammelte Studien* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007) 230–5.

[37] *HE* 2.1.4.

[38] *HE* 2.1.3.

[39] *HE* 2.1.12.

[40] *HE* 2.9.4; 2.14.6–15.1.

[41] *HE* 2.14.6.

[42] *HE* 2.15.1–2.

[43] *HE* 2.16.1, 3.

[44] *HE* 2.15.2; cf. 1 Pet 5.13.

[45] *HE* 3.1.2; cf. 1 Pet 1.1.

[46] *HE* 2.25.5–7. On Peter's death in history and tradition, see Markus Bockmuehl, *The Remembered Peter: In Ancient Reception and Modern Debate* (WUNT, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010) 114–32.

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> within catholic tradition [ἐν καθολικοῖς], for no older or contemporary church writer has appealed to testimonies taken from them… These are the books bearing the name of Peter, of which only one letter is genuine [γνησίαν] and acknowledged [ὁμολογουμένην] by the early presbyters.[47]

Four of the five rejected Petrine works belong within precisely the genres that comprise Eusebius' *homologoumena*, his proposed New Testament, and many early readers will have found no grounds to suspect, and every reason to welcome, a Gospel, an Acts, an additional Letter and an Apocalypse with Peter's prestigious name attached.[48] It is precisely such readers that Eusebius here targets. The list of pseudonymous works serves to safeguard the integrity of the apostolic biography, but its still more important function is to dissuade their potential readers from reading them and to direct them instead towards the single Petrine text that Eusebius deems authentic. It is true that the second Petrine letter obtains a partial reprieve. While Eusebius is clear that Peter did not write it, 2 Peter is too well established in Christian reading practices to be easily dislodged. In the other cases, the allegation of pseudepigraphy serves as a deterrent to reading. A falsified authorship claim renders a text at best useless and at worst dangerous, and it is therefore essential to know whether the voice that addresses us in a text is that of 'the great and mighty Peter, leader of all the other apostles on account of his virtue'[49] or the voice of some unknown figure who impersonates the apostle with intent to deceive. With roots in the biographical genre, allegations of pseudepigraphy are integral to the task of canon formation. Pseudepigraphy is for Eusebius the necessary correlate of canonicity: it is the exposure of false texts that brings their genuine counterparts to light with unambiguous clarity. The exposure is required because, like counterfeit currency, the false texts are in widespread circulation. Users of those texts must be disabused of their naïve and dangerous trust in them.

Authorship issues also arise in Eusebius' biographical treatment of the apostles Paul and John, although here the problem of pseudepigraphy is posed less sharply. As Eusebius has already shown in the case of Mark, biography can vindicate texts as well as disqualifying them. Mark is given a biographical profile of his own, beyond his role as Peter's interpreter: Eusebius reports a tradition that Mark was 'sent to Egypt to proclaim the gospel he had written', and that he established flourishing churches in Alexandria.[50] As in the parallel case of Mark and Peter, Luke's close biographical links to Paul confirm that his Gospel and Acts are 'inspired books'.[51] According to Eusebius, the Gospel of John is placed after Luke in the four gospel collection because it was the last to be written, composed in the apostle's extreme old age. Eusebius uses biographical traditions about the apostle John to complete his influential construction of an extended 'apostolic age' that begins with the Ascension in the year 30 CE and ends with John's demise during the reign of the emperor Trajan, that

[47] *HE* 3.3.1–2, 4.

[48] The popularity of these Petrine works is well-attested in the ancient evidence: see the relevant introductions in W. Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha* (2 vols., Eng. tr. R. McL. Wilson; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1990-2). See also *Das Petrusevangelium und die Petrusapokalypse* (ed. Thomas J. Kraus and Tobias Nicklas; GCS; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2004); Marietheres Döhler, *Acta Petri: Text, Übersetzung und Kommentar zu den Actus Vercellenses* (TUGAL; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018); Wilhelm Pratscher, 'Scripture and Christology in the Preaching of Peter (*Kerygma Petri*)', *Studies on the Text of the New Testament and Early Christianity: Essays in Honour of Michael W. Holmes* (ed. Daniel Gurtner, Juan Hernández, Jr. and Paul Foster, Leiden: Brill, 2015) 555–77; Dennis D. Buchholz, *Your Eyes will be Opened: A Study of the Greek (Ethiopic) Apocalypse of Peter* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988). Tobias Nicklas has argued convincingly that the section from the Akhmim manuscript attributed to the Apocalypse of Peter may be a second excerpt from the Gospel of Peter (*Studien zum Petrusevangelium* (WUNT, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020) 32–50).

[49] *HE* 2.14.6.

[50] *HE* 2.16.1.

[51] *HE* 3.4.6.

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is, at some point prior to 117 CE.[52] Irenaeus' testimony confirms that the apostle John saw his Revelation when exiled to Patmos during the reign of Domitian and that he returned to Ephesus after Domitian's death;[53] and John must have remained alive and active long afterwards, for Clement's story about an erring youth whom the apostle restored to the church requires the passage of a number of years.[54] There follows an explanation of why John wrote his Gospel at such a late date. According to Eusebius, John had always preached his message without feeling any need to write it down. When he eventually became acquainted with the work of the earlier evangelists, he endorsed it but noted that they overlooked the period of Jesus's ministry that overlapped with John the Baptist's. John wrote as he did to fill that gap in the record.[55] The authorship of other Johannine literature is more problematic for Eusebius. The first letter attributed to John is genuine, but the other two are disputed, as is the Book of Revelation.[56] Eusebius will later set out a case for rejecting Revelation on the grounds that its attribution to the apostle John is mistaken.[57] This authorship issue is deferred, however, and the biographical material relating to John is followed by the summary passage in which Eusebius presents his lists of accepted and rejected texts.[58] These are placed here because the Johannine biographical material marks the close of the apostolic age and the end of the possibility of authentic apostolic writings. Eusebius' proposed New Testament arises out of his apostolic biographies.

The effect of reading Eusebius' lists in their wider biographical context is to highlight the role of authorship in his innovative attempt to construct a New Testament collection with a fixed limit. The relevant literature is placed under four categories: lists are provided of 'acknowledged', 'disputed', or 'spurious' books, and there is also an indeterminate number of books which, being heretical in content, do not even count as 'spurious'.[59] Underlying these four categories is a binary opposition: the books in question are either apostolic or pseudo-apostolic. Apostolicity is understood broadly to include works by the non-apostolic Mark and Luke, but not so broadly as to encompass pseudo-apostolic productions such as the Letter of James. Yet apostolicity is also claimed by the disputed, spurious and heretical texts. Eusebius seeks to undermine that claim in at least four different ways, by alleging (1) pseudepigraphal authorship (the five rejected Catholic Epistles and several of the rejected Petrine texts); (2) possible misattribution (the confusion between the Apostle John and the Elder John, who may have authored the Book of Revelation); (3) insufficient proximity to the apostolic circle (Barnabas, Hermas); (4) the fictive character of stories featuring an apostolic protagonist (the 'spurious' Acts of Paul, the 'heretical' Acts of Andrew or John). What Eusebius rejects in all these cases is a claim to apostolicity, precisely the claim that Eusebius accepts in the case of the *homologoumena*. So the binary opposition between the apostolic and the pseudo-apostolic can be reduced to the single category of 'apostolic lit-

[52] For the Ascension as marking the start of the apostolic age, see *HE* 2, prologue. According to Eusebius, Jesus' ministry began in the fifteenth year of Tiberius (cf. Lk 3.1) and lasted for less than four years (*HE* 1.10.1–2).

[53] *HE* 3.18.1–4.

[54] *HE* 3.23.5–19.

[55] *HE* 3.24.7–13; cf. Jn 3.22–30, Mk 1.14. The story from Clement is narrated in *HE* 3.23.5–19.

[56] *HE* 3.24.17–18.

[57] The author of Revelation repeatedly identifies himself as 'John' (Rev 1.1, 4, 9; 22.8), but Eusebius finds evidence of a second, non-apostolic 'Elder John' in a confusing passage cited from Papias, supported by stylistic arguments against apostolic authorship by Dionysius of Alexandria. Eusebius also notes the sensational claim of Caius of Rome that Revelation is pseudepigraphal and that the real author was Cerinthus, a notorious heretic, but he sides with Dionysius in rejecting this extreme view and in arguing for misattribution rather than pseudepigraphy. See *HE* 3.39.3–6 (Papias); 3.28.1–2 (Caius); 7.25.1–26, cf. 3.28.3 (Dionysius).

[58] *HE* 3.25.1–7.

[59] *HE* 3.25.7. Discussions of Eusebius' categories and their ambiguities (e.g. Metzger, *Canon*, 201–7) typically fail to clarify the scope of the overall textual field onto which the categories are imposed.

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erature', that is, literature that represents itself as authentically grounded in the agency of apostles. Eusebius constructs his New Testament from a much wider body of popular apostolic literature, first imposing the crucial distinction between the apostolic and the pseudo-apostolic and then nuancing the latter category by differentiating its three species, ranging from the relatively harmless (the 'disputed' texts) to the seriously dangerous (the heretical texts). These distinctions are made within a single textual field, however, which Eusebius differentiates from the 'post-apostolic' texts of Ignatius or Papias where the question of canonical status does not arise. Whether Eusebius deems texts to be apostolic or pseudo-apostolic, these texts all address their readers with a claim to apostolic authority.

The texts that Eusebius categorises as apostolic or pseudo-apostolic are all widely known and available, and any text that alleges an apostolic link is likely to be regarded as authentic and authoritative by many of its readers. Thus, the Eusebian and patristic distinction between authentic books of the New Testament and Christian apocrypha has to be constructed; the promiscuous reading habits of those who assume that the Gospel of Thomas or the Acts of Andrew are genuinely apostolic must be disciplined. Instilling that discipline is the task that Eusebius sets himself. That task will later be taken up by successors such as Athanasius, and the New Testament collection that they constructed continues to dominate our understanding of early Christian literature to this day.[60]

Eusebius' lists of apostolic and pseudo-apostolic texts occur towards the end of his account of the apostolic age, summarising the earlier discussions of authorship issues that conclude his contributions to the biographies of James, Peter, Paul and John. Authorship is not a necessary feature of apostolic biography, as the example of James demonstrates, but where apostles write as well as preach that biographical fact is duly noted and safeguarded from authorship claims that misrepresent the biographical subject.

3. The Philosophical Lives Tradition

Eusebius' correlation of biography, authorship and pseudepigraphy derives not from Christian antecedents but from Hellenistic literary culture.[61] This claim can be demonstrated by turning to a work with notable parallels to the *Ecclesiastical History*, the *Lives of*

[60] In the introduction to their *Antike christliche Apocryphen* edition, Christoph Markschies and Jens Schröter criticise the Hennecke-Schneemelcher *Neutestamentliche Apocryphen* for its emphasis on proximity to the genres and content of the New Testament as a criterion for inclusion, potentially resulting in 'eine Art Gegenbibel des kanonischen Neuen Testaments' (*Antike christliche Apocryphen in deutscher Übersetzung. I. Band: Evangelien und Verwandtes, Teilband 1* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012) 5). Markschies and Schröter acknowledge that the apocryphal literature includes gospels, apostolic acts, apostolic letters and apocalypses, but they choose to highlight the differences between the canonical and apocryphal exemplars of these genres. That difference is said to be particularly striking in the case of the canonical and non-canonical Acts literature, 'weil die kanonisch gewordene Apostelgeschichte mehr oder weniger den Gesetzen der Gattung (jüdisch-hellenistischer) Geschichtsschreibung folgt, während die apokryph gewordenen Apostelakten der Romanliteratur zuzurechnen sind' (6). It is unlikely that this difference would have seemed so clear to ancient non-elite readers, for whom additional apostolic acts texts may have complemented the Lukan prototype – as, perhaps, they were intended to do. Acts 1.8 ('You will be my witnesses… to the ends of the earth') can be seen as a mandate for additional apostolic Acts literature, since it bears little relation to the canonical Acts narrative itself.

[61] The role of the individual named author in the construction of the Greek literary canon is highlighted with extensive documentation by Reviel Netz, *Scale, Space and Canon in Ancient Literary Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020): 'We should not cease to marvel at the fact that the Greeks had *authors*' (96, italics original). Netz notes the supporting role played by literary biographies and biographical anecdotes (157–76): '[T]o read, one needed to know who the author was, and so the canonical authors… accumulated a biographical tradition' (163).

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the Philosophers compiled by Diogenes Laertius and generally dated to the first half of the third century CE.[62]

Diogenes' work is concerned with 'the origins, successions [διαδοχαί], parts and sects [αἱρέσεις] of philosophy'.[63] Similarly, Eusebius lists 'the successions [διαδοχάς] of the holy apostles' as the first of the topics with which his work is concerned.[64] For Eusebius, major churches are founded by apostles who are succeeded by bishops and church writers who ensure institutional continuity and ideological integrity in the face of pressures from pagans, Jews and heretics. Diogenes' 'successions' are the successive leaders and representatives of philosophical schools, following on from their founders. These successions are intellectual and institutional genealogies accompanied by biographies. According to Diogenes, there is an Ionian school that begins with Thales of Miletus and is passed on to Anaximander, Anaximenes, Anaxagoras, Archelaus and Socrates, who is said to have introduced the study of ethics.[65] Then Plato founds the 'Old Academy' and is succeeded by Speusippus, Xenocrates, Polemo, Crantor, Crates and Arcesilaus, founder of the 'Middle Academy'.[66]

These and many other figures are listed in Diogenes' prologue and provided with extensive biographical coverage in the ten books that follow. In most cases, these biographies provide only cursory accounts of a philosopher's thought and are concerned instead to present the life of the individual philosopher as a *performance,* by way of anecdotes and apophthegms that often highlight its bizarre and entertaining aspects. Thales is mocked by an old woman when, intent on studying the night sky, he falls into a ditch.[67] Socrates visits a shopping mall and remarks, 'How many things I can do without!'[68] Xenocrates vindicates his reputation for heroic self-control by resisting seduction by the courtesan Phryne while allowing her to share his narrow bed.[69] Zeno is a Phoenician merchant drawn to philosophy when he visits an Athenian bookshop following a shipwreck.[70] Chrysippus dies in a fit of hysterical laughter after his figs are eaten by a donkey.[71] Strongly individualised portraits arise out of the genealogical framework, and Diogenes integrates the two by providing extensive information about a philosopher's teachers, associates and rivals. Many of the biographies conclude with bibliographical information about a philosopher's literary output. Titles of works are listed with minimal additional comment; pseudepigraphal works

[62] On Diogenes Laertius, see James Warren, 'Diogenes Laertius, Biographer of Philosophy', *Ordering Knowledge in the Roman Empire* (ed. Jason König and Tim Whitmarsh, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 133–49; Sean Adams, *Genre of Acts*, 104–9; on the reception and historical significance of Diogenes' work; Anthony Grafton, 'Diogenes Laertius: From Inspiration to Annoyance (and Back)', *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers: Diogenes Laertius* (tr. Pamela Mensch; ed. James Miller; New York: Oxford University Press, 2018) 546–53. Diogenes is discussed in relation to Eusebius by David DeVore, '"Genre and Eusebius" *Ecclesiastical History*: Prolegomena for a Focused Debate', *Eusebius of Caesarea: Tradition and Innovations* (ed. Aaron P. Johnson and Jeremy Schott; Hellenic Studies Series; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013; 19–45) 41–4; cf. David L. Dungan, *Constantine's Bible*, 34–53. For a broader treatment of philosophical biography, see *Die griechische Biographie in hellenistischer Zeit* (ed. M. Erler and S. Schorn; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007).

[63] *Vit. phil.* prologue, 20. I have used the Loeb edition of this work: *Diogenes Laertius, Lives of the Eminent Philosophers* (ed. R. D. Hicks; 2 vols; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925). Valuable essays on different aspects of the *Lives* are included in the recent Oxford translation (see preceding note).

[64] *HE* 1.1.1.

[65] *Vit. phil.* prologue, 14.

[66] *Vit. phil.* prologue, 14.

[67] *Vit. Phil.* 1.34. The story goes back to Plato's *Theaetetus*, 174a, where it is cited by Socrates as indicative of the philosopher's detachment from society.

[68] *Vit. phil.* 2.24.

[69] *Vit. phil.* 4.6.

[70] *Vit. phil.* 7.3.

[71] *Vit. phil.* 7.185.

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falsely ascribed to a prestigious philosophical author may be noted. Bibliography is here a component of biography rather than an invitation to intellectual engagement, for biography serves as an adjunct to philosophy and even as a substitute for philosophical study and practice. Diogenes' biographies offer their reader an easy way to become knowledgeable about philosophy without having to read laborious treatises *On the Good* in multiple books. His 'successions' represent intellectual genealogies, but they also serve to humanise and subvert the philosophical enterprise, turning it into an entertaining spectacle in which one strongly characterised performance of the philosophical life is followed by another in seemingly endless sequence. Like the old woman who mocks Thales after his unfortunate accident, Diogenes brings philosophical pretensions down to earth.[72]

Eusebius is writing history, a genre largely resistant to the anecdotal trivia that can feature within biography. Yet the boundary between the two genres is unmarked. Like the *Lives of the Philosophers*, the *Ecclesiastical History* preserves a mass of biographical and bibliographical information relating both to the founders (here, apostles) and their successors. Like the *Ecclesiastical History*, the *Lives of the Philosophers* narrates the history of an institution and its literary tradition (here, the Greek philosophical schools). Both works are constructed on a genealogical foundation that provides the framework for their extensive biographical and bibliographical material. In their bibliographical aspect, both works recognise a distinction between 'primary' and 'secondary' literature. For Eusebius, primary literature consists in the authentic apostolic and prophetic writings of the canonical scriptures, to which there is a secondary literature that serves as commentary, either in the literal sense (Origen) or in the form of defence against misrepresentations by pagans, Jews or heretics (Justin, Irenaeus and others). For Diogenes, primary literature consists in the philosophical works produced both by founders of schools and their successors, while secondary literature is represented by the tradition of philosophical biography to which Diogenes himself belongs.[73]

Diogenes repeatedly acknowledges his debt to his sources, and that debt is very extensive.[74] He cites an early *Lives of the Philosophers* by Satyrus (third century BCE), later epitomised by Heraclides Lembus,[75] and similar or closely related works are referred to under a range of titles. Diogenes refers to Ἀπομνημονεύματα or 'Recollections' of Crates by a contemporary of this philosopher, Zeno of Citium, and the same title is assigned to a much later work in five books by Favorinus of Arles (*c.* 85–155 CE). That work seems to have discussed many of the figures featured in Diogenes' *Lives*, though without the use of 'successions' as its organising principle.[76] The multi-volume Ὑπομνήματα of Pamphila

[72] Michael Erler argues that the tension between biographical focus on the individual and philosophical concern with the universal is already present in Plato's dialogues, from which a fairly comprehensive biography of Socrates can be constructed ('Biographische Elemente bei Platon und in hellenistischer Philosophie', *Die griechische Biographie* (ed. Erler and Schorn) 11–24). Erler suggests that the tension can be resolved if Plato sees the individual (Socrates) as embodying the ideal (20). An alternative would be to allow the tension between 'Plato as artist' and 'Plato as philosopher' to remain.

[73] It is possible that Eusebius was aware of Diogenes' work, although this point is not essential to the present argument. On the extensive library resources available to Eusebius, see Anthony Grafton and Megan Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book: Origen, Eusebius, and the Library of Caesarea* (Cambridge: Belknap, 2006) 209–11.

[74] A list of the biographical source named by Diogenes is provided by Adams, *Genre of Acts*, 261–3. Adams rightly notes Diogenes' 'near obsessive citation of sources' (*Genre of Acts*, 100).

[75] Diogenes cites Satyrus' work in his biographies of Bias (*Vit. Phil.* 1.82), Anaxagoras (2.13), Plato (3.9), Diogenes the Cynic (6.80) and Empedocles (8.53, 8.59, 8.60; cf. 8.40, Heraclides' epitome).

[76] Diogenes refers to Favorinus' work in his biographies of Pittacus (*Vit. phil.* 1.79), Socrates (2.23, 2.39), Plato (3.21, 3.25, 3.41, 3.48, 3.62), Speusippus (4.5), Aristotle (5.21), Demetrius (5.76), Crates (6.90), Pythagoras (8.13), Empedocles (8.53, 8.64, 8.73), Eudoxus (8.90), Xenophanes (9.20), Parmenides (9.23). Diogenes' citations indicate

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of Epidaurus (first century CE) seems to have been structured along chronological lines. The content Diogenes cites from Pamphila's work is exclusively biographical and anecdotal: how Thales sacrificed an ox as a thank-offering on solving a geometrical problem (from Pamphila's book 1), how Socrates rebuffed Alcibiades' offer of land for building purposes (from her book 7), how Plato declined an invitation to provide a law code for a newly founded city (book 25).[77] Other works of collected philosophical biography circulate under the short title 'Successions' (Διαδοχαί) and evidently provide further models for Diogenes' work. In *c.* 200 BCE, Antisthenes of Rhodes compiled a 'Successions of the Philosophers' from which Diogenes derives biographical detail about a number of figures including Theodorus the Atheist, whose controversial work *On the Gods* (Περὶ θεῶν) he claims to have read.[78] In the vast majority of cases, Diogenes' citations are from secondary biographical literature rather than from original philosophical works, of which he usually seems to know only the titles. In the second century BCE, Sotion of Alexandria wrote a Διαδοχαί in twenty-three books, epitomised again by Heraclides Lembus who is also credited with a Διαδοχή of his own in six books.[79] Repeated citations from the Διαδοχαί of Alexander Polyhistor (born *c.* 100 BCE) confirm the popularity of biographically oriented histories of philosophy, especially in the Hellenistic period.[80] Late in that period, Demetrius of Magnesia extends the scope of literary biography still further in his work *On Poets and Writers of the Same Name*, a work that Diogenes admires and cites more than any other.[81] According to Demetrius, there are no less than five significant literary individuals called Plato, one of whom was a pupil of Aristotle, while another wrote comedies. Many other celebrated philosophical names multiply disconcertingly. There are eight men called Aristotle, all active in literary pursuits except for a gymnastics instructor.[82] There were eight men called Zeno, including an Epicurean philosopher and a military historian.[83]

The works that make up Diogenes' library of philosophical Βιοί, Ἀπομνημονεύματα, Ὑπομνήματα and Διαδοχαί sound remarkably similar. In most if not all cases, multiple biographies are based on a framework of intellectual and institutional genealogies in which founders establish schools that persist over generations under the leadership of successors. If Diogenes' citations give an accurate account of these long-lost works, they relied more heavily on anecdote than on philosophical ideas to establish the individual identities of both founders and successors.[84] Readers wishing to engage more fully with a

that material relating to Pittacus, Plato and Demetrius was to be found in Favorinus' first book, and that book two featured Speusippus, Aristotle, and Crates, book three Plato (again) and Pythagoras and book five Parmenides.

[77] Diogenes cites Pamphila at *Vit. phil.* 1.25 (Thales), 2.25 (Socrates), 3.23 (Plato). Material relating to additional pre-Socratic figures is cited from Pamphila's book 1 (*Vit. phil.* 1.76: Chilon), book 5 (1.99: Periander); by book 32 Pamphila is discussing the Aristotelean Theophrastus (5.36).

[78] Diogenes, *Vit. phil.* 2.98. Other citations from Antisthenes occur at 1.40 (Thales), 2.39 (Socrates), 2.134 (Menedemus), 6.77 (Diogenes the Cynic), 6.87 (Crates), 7.68 (Cleanthes), 9.6 (Heraclitus), 9.27 (Zeno of Elea).

[79] Diogenes, *Vit. Phil.* 5.79, 5.94.

[80] Diogenes cites Alexander at 1.116 (Pherecydes), 2.19 (Socrates), 2.106 (Euclides), 3.5 (Plato), 4.62 (Carneades), 7.179 (Chrysippus), 8.25 (Pythagoras) and 9.61 (Pyrrho).

[81] Demetrius' title is given in this form at Diogenes, *Vit. phil.* 1.112; 5.4. Elsewhere this work is referred to as *On Men of the Same Name*. On Demetrius' work, see Pietro Zaccaria, 'Distinguishing Homonymous Writers, Detecting Spurious Works: Demetrius of Magnesia's *On Poets and Authors with the Same Name*', *Defining Authorship, Debating Authenticity: Problems of Authority from Classical Antiquity to the Renaissance* (ed. Roberta Berardi, Martina Filosa and Davide Massimo, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021) 67–84.

[82] Diogenes, *Vit. phil.* 5.35.

[83] Diogenes, *Vit. phil.* 7.35.

[84] So Jørgen Mejer, 'Biography and Doxography: Four Crucial Questions Raised by Diogenes Laertius', *Die griechische Biographie* (ed. Erler and Schorn, 431–42) 436–8. Mejer cites Plutarch's claim that anecdote is an effective indicator of moral character (436).

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philosopher's ideas are directed to the comprehensive bibliographies Diogenes provided, derived probably from his predecessors. Yet the bibliographies serve a primarily biographical purpose rather than providing recommendations for further reading. That Chrysippus wrote 311 works on logic is as striking a feature of his biography as his death by laughter after the donkey ate his figs.[85] And it is the biographical context of the bibliographical lists that accounts for the allegations of pseudepigraphy that Diogenes finds in the mass of secondary literature at his disposal. A conscientious biographer will wish to eliminate false authorship attributions along with any other misrepresentations of the biographical subject, whether that biographer is a historian of philosophy or a historian of the early church.

It would be hard to over-estimate Diogenes' lack of originality, and it is that very lack that makes him valuable for our purposes.[86] Diogenes is witness to a literary culture that extends back over centuries and that creates and transmits sharply defined biographical profiles within which authorship plays a significant role. Allegations of pseudepigraphy derive from this construction of the individualised authorial persona. While pseudepigraphy is a minor issue for Diogenes and a major one for Eusebius, the parallel is clear and indicates that Eusebius' assumptions about intellectual and institutional genealogies, biography and authorship reflect his immersion in Greco-Roman literary culture. Like Eusebius, Diogenes reports allegations of pseudepigraphy made by his predecessors. Three examples will suffice to illustrate the role of pseudepigraphy allegations within the literary traditions that Eusebius continues to inhabit.[87]

(1) The first of Diogenes' biographies is devoted to Thales of Miletus. Diogenes reports that there is some doubt whether Thales wrote anything at all: 'According to some, he left nothing in writing, for the *Nautical Astronomy* attributed to him [ἡ εἰς αὐτὸν ἀναφερομένη Ναυτικὴ ἀστρολογία] is said to be the work of Phocus of Samos.'[88] While it is not clear whether the attribution of this work to Thales stems from Phocus himself or a later editor, the outcome is the same: certain unnamed critics are said to have unmasked a work circulating under the name of Thales as authored by someone else. In the biographical traditions reported by Diogenes, Thales is celebrated not as an author but as an initiator, pioneer or discoverer. Thales was the first to identify the constellation known as Ursa Minor (so Callimachus), the first to predict eclipses of the sun and the solstices (so Eudoxus, in his *History of Astronomy*), the first to assert the immortality of the soul (so Choerilus the poet), the first to inscribe a right-angled triangle in a circle (so Pamphila), the first to establish the relative size of the sun and the moon and the first to propose a month of thirty days.[89] The figure of Thales is deployed to serve as the origin and foundation of fields such as astronomy, geometry and philosophy; Diogenes cites eight authors who attest Thales' priority in one or other of these areas. It is this ongoing Thales tradition that accounts both for the attribution to him of a work on *Nautical Astronomy* and for its exposure as pseudepigraphal. On the one hand, Thales' astronomical expertise makes it understandable that a work on *Nautical Astronomy* should be ascribed to him, whether through forgery or conjecture. On the other hand, Thales' legendary role makes it hard to accept that he authored a prosaic manual for sailors. A native of the island of Samos is therefore proposed as a plausible author for the navigational treatise circulating under Thales' name.

[85] Diogenes, *Vit. phil.* 7.189–98; 7.185.

[86] Note however Mejer's suggestion that the combination of biography and doxography may be an original feature in Diogenes' work ('Biography and Doxography', 438–41).

[87] James Corke-Webster rightly emphasises that 'Eusebius, like all early Christian thinkers, must be rooted in his Greco-Roman context'; *Eusebius and Empire*, 9.

[88] *Vit. phil.* 1.23.

[89] *Vit. phil.* 1.23–4.

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For the philosophical lives tradition as for Eusebius, it is not a problem if foundational figures such as Thales, James or Peter leave behind little or nothing in writing. There is no pressure to treat works circulating under their names as authentic. For many philosophers and most apostles, writing is not a core part of their activity. Their role is to teach and embody the truth and to create or maintain institutional contexts where that truth can be handed down in succession. These revered figures may fittingly be remembered not through any writings of their own but through the recollections and traditions recorded by others – by Diogenes and Eusebius and in the multiple sources on which each was able to draw.

(2) Diogenes devotes the fifth book of his *Lives of the Philosophers* to Aristotle and his successors, of whom the last to be treated is Heraclides (*fl.* 360 BCE), who came to Athens from Heraclea in Pontus and became a student first of Speusippus, Plato's successor as head of the Academy, and then of Aristotle. A long list is provided of Heraclides' works on philosophical and literary topics; Diogenes praises his literary style.[90] Unusually, Heraclides is both the author of pseudepigraphal texts and the victim of a pseudepigraphal hoax. According to Diogenes, 'Aristoxenus the musician says that Heraclides wrote tragedies and entitled them [αὐτὰς ἐπιγράφειν] as works by Thespis', the traditional originator of the tragic genre.[91] Here as in the case of Thales, a founding figure provides an obvious target for the intending pseudepigrapher. Another pseudepigrapher was also at work, however, Heraclides' one-time pupil Dionysius the Renegade (who earned his nickname by abandoning the austere Stoic school for the hedonistic Cyrenaics).[92] Dionysius wrote a play called the *Parthenopaeus*, which he represented as a work of Sophocles and brought to his teacher's attention. In one of his literary critical works, Heraclides duly cited the *Parthenopaeus* as a genuine work of Sophocles and was reluctant to accept Dionysius' admission that he had written it himself.

The anecdote illustrates how pseudepigraphy can be effective in practice. The necessary preconditions are, first, the existence of established 'canonical' authors, and second, the assumption that a lost work by a canonical author might still plausibly come to light. These preconditions create an opportunity for the pseudepigrapher to put his own work into circulation in the name of the target author, accompanied by a fictitious claim to have 'found' the work in question. Heraclides received from Dionysius a copy of a lost work of Sophocles, and after engaging with it in his scholarship, he refuses to accept that it was spurious. The case of Serapion and the Gospel of Peter is a parallel. In a letter partially preserved by Eusebius, the bishop of Antioch admits that he initially endorsed the communal use of the Gospel of Peter, assuming this to be a previously unknown work of the great apostle rather than a pseudepigraphon. When informed that this text is favoured by heretics, and after reading it himself, Serapion lists heretical additions he has identified which, when removed, will restore the authentic Petrine text.[93] Like Heraclides, Serapion is unable to admit that he was wrong to endorse the text in question. In contrast, Eusebius

[90] *Vit. phil.* 5.86.

[91] *Vit. phil.* 5.92.

[92] Cf. *Vit. phil.* 7.166–7.

[93] Eusebius preserves excerpts of two of Serapion's letters, both concerned with the exposure of falsehood. The first of these denounces 'the false order of the so-called New Prophecy', the Montanist movement (*HE* 5.19.2), and the second is a treatise entitled 'On the so-called Gospel according to Peter' (*HE* 6.12.2–6). Eusebius' citation opens with the statement that 'we receive Peter and the other apostles as the Lord, but the writings falsely ascribed to them [τὰ ὀνόματι αὐτῶν ψευδεπίγραφα] we reject, as people of experience [ὡς ἔμπειροι]'. Yet Serapion concludes that the Gospel of Peter has been interpolated by heretics and does not claim that the entire text is pseudepigraphal.

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himself is in no doubt that the Gospel of Peter is wholly spurious and heretical.[94] In recording the two cases, Eusebius and Diogenes indicate that they both belong to a literary culture in which canon formation is dependent on judgements about authorship claims.

(3) The closest philosophical analogy to the Eusebian association of pseudepigraphy with canon formation may be found in Diogenes' summary of an elaborate attempt to organise the Platonic dialogues into a coherent format, perhaps with a view to an edition of Plato's complete works. According to Diogenes, Thrasylus claimed that Plato 'published his dialogues in tetralogies, like those of the tragic poets'.[95] Thrasylus identifies a total of fifty-six genuine dialogues (γνήσιοι διάλογοι), inclusive of the ten books of the *Republic* and the twelve books of the *Laws* but reducing to thirty-six and nine tetralogies if these are regarded as single works. Dialogues are each provided with a double title, 'the one taken from the name of the dialogue-partner, the other from the subject matter' (thus the fourth dialogue of the first tetralogy is entitled, *Phaedo, or On the Soul*).[96] Dialogues are assigned to one of eight philosophical genres, each being labelled as πειραστικός (×5), ἠθικός (×12), λογικός (×4), μαιευτικός (×5), ἀνατρεπτικός (×4), ἐνδεικτικός (×1), πολιτικός (×4), or φυσικός (×1).[97] The nine tetralogies are listed in presumed chronological sequence, and there is no consistent pattern in the distribution of dialogues among the eight genres except for a gradual expansion in the repertoire from which successive tetralogies are drawn. After mentioning several less ambitious attempts to organise the dialogues, Diogenes lists ten further dialogues that 'are generally considered spurious [νοθεύονται]'.[98] The double or single titles of these texts sound plausibly Platonic, and they must have circulated widely enough to be identified as pseudepigraphal and requiring explicit exclusion from the Platonic canon. As with Eusebius, there are some residual ambiguities. Thrasylus lists a dialogue entitled *The Rivals* in his fourth tetralogy but is elsewhere said to have been unsure of its Platonic authorship.[99] The *Epinomis* is placed within Thrasylus' ninth and final tetralogy, but 'some say that Philippus of Opus transcribed the *Laws* from wax tablets and that the *Epinomis* is his own work'.[100]

4. Conclusion

Eusebius' listings of 'acknowledged', 'disputed' and 'spurious' apostolic texts reproduce the categories already employed in these earlier literary debates. Like the apostolic pseudepigrapha, pseudepigraphic works attributed to Thales, Thespis, Sophocles or Plato lay claim to the normative authority of these figures.[101] Pseudepigrapha tacitly reject the assumption that the literary output of such figures can be reduced to a fixed number, such as zero in the case of Thales, thirty-six in the case of Plato – or, in Eusebius' Christian context, zero in the case of James, one in the case of Peter and twenty-one for

[94] *HE* 3.25.6.
[95] *Vit. phil.* 3.56.
[96] *Vit. phil.* 3.57, 58.
[97] *Vit. phil.* 3.58–61; cf. 3.50–1.
[98] *Vit. phil.* 3.62.
[99] *Vit. phil.* 9.37.
[100] *Vit. phil.* 3.37.
[101] In view of these passages from Diogenes, it is hard to agree with Netz's assertion that '[p]seudepigrapha are a very minor Greek tradition', in contrast to its centrality in Judaism and Christianity (*Scale, Space and Canon*, 108n). Pseudepigraphal works attributed to figures such as Sophocles and Plato would seem to confirm Netz's thesis of the Greek invention of the author-role.

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the Eusebian New Testament as a whole.[102] Biography is the genre within which questions of pseudepigraphy may arise, for literary work is a biographical fact and failure to expose a pseudepigraphal attribution would be a biographical error. Biography can thus generate a finite and restricted list of literary works and alert readers to the dangers of deception. It contributes to canon formation not just by listing genuine texts but also by eliminating spurious ones, establishing or reinforcing the categories of 'genuine' and 'spurious' as it does so. While it is true that the biographical information accompanying Eusebius' authorship claims may be fairly limited, a minimum of information is required if an authorial name such as 'John' is to identify an individual with a unique personal profile that includes but is not restricted to his activity as an author.

Eusebius' engagement with issues of authorship and pseudepigraphy should be understood as an adaptation to formative Christian texts of assumptions and expectations derived from Greco-Roman literary culture. A distinctive feature of that culture is the demand that texts be provided with named authors, and that the most significant of those authors be provided with biographies. Christian or otherwise, readers within this culture wished to feel themselves addressed by uniquely named individuals, their uniqueness guaranteed not just by their name, which might easily be reduplicated, but also by biographical specificities. Thus, originally anonymous texts like the earliest Gospels soon acquire named authors, and those authors begin to acquire biographies. So 'Mark' ceases to be just a name and becomes an individual who accompanied Peter to Rome as his interpreter, who responded to the popular demand that he place Peter's recollections on record, and who took his Gospel to Alexandria, where he established a church in which the philosophical life was lived to such perfection that it excited the admiration of no less a figure than Philo.[103] Entirely fictive though it may be, Eusebius' Mark biography serves rhetorically to establish the authentic apostolic credentials of the Gospel that bears Mark's name, and it achieves this by providing the literary work with a plausible setting within a privileged individual life-story. Later in the *Ecclesiastical History*, Eusebius provides still fuller authentication for this Gospel by way of the testimonies of figures such as Papias, Irenaeus, Clement and Origen – testimonies that echo the earlier biographical material of which they are in fact the source.

In contrast, there is no biographical authentication for the Gospel of Thomas. Eusebius lists this Gospel only as an example of a heretical work that does not even deserve the designation 'spurious'. No church writer has mentioned it, he claims; the style is unapostolic and the content unorthodox.[104] At the start of book 3, a brief biographical note traced back to Origen states that Thomas was assigned to Parthia as the sphere for his missionary work, but there is no mention here of a written Gospel bearing his name.[105] This biographical silence already indicates that the Gospel attributed to Thomas cannot be authentic, and that its real author was some unknown heretic living in the post-apostolic age, in which heresies of all sorts spread like weeds among the wheat. Biography creates the New Testament both by providing authorial names and biographical contexts for the approved apostolic texts and by denying them to their rejected counterparts. Biography establishes a quasi-personal relationship between present-day readers and known apostolic authors, while the lack of biographical authentication denies that relationship to those who read apostolic literature

[102] Assuming the exclusion of five Catholic Epistles and the Book of Revelation.

[103] *HE* 2.15.1–17.6. As Corke-Webster shows, Eusebius' claim that Philo's 'Therapeutae' are a Christian community is important for his wider argument that it is Christians who best exemplify a truly philosophical lifestyle (*Eusebius and Empire*, 103–5, 141–2).

[104] *HE* 3.25.6.

[105] *HE* 3.1.1.

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now denounced as pseudo-apostolic. In that double sense, the New Testament canon as conceived by Eusebius is the product not of some inner-Christian necessity but of Greco-Roman literary culture – specifically, its focus on authorial biography and its critical awareness that authorial names without biographical authentication are not to be trusted.

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