

*Hebrews as Pseudepigraphon: The History and Significance of the Pauline Attribution of Hebrews.* By Clare K. Rothschild. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament I 235. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009. xvii. Pp. 287. € 89.

In her book *Hebrews as Pseudepigraphon*, Clare Rothschild challenges the prevailing assumptions about the origin and purpose of Hebrews and, in a comprehensive and wide-ranging investigation, argues that Hebrews was, from its very inception, a Pauline pseudepigraphon that was written as an addition and even correction to the Pauline corpus. In order to make this argument, Rothschild challenges assumptions about the history of Hebrews' reception in the church, the nature of the early manuscript evidence, the purpose of the postscript (Heb 13:18-25), the state of academic research into Christian pseudepigrapha, the relationship of Hebrews to the Pauline corpus and to Acts, the nature of oral traditions, the character of Christian prophecy, and the purpose of Hebrews' infamous theological contradictions. Rothschild's argument is both formidable and delicate. The force of the argument comes from the cumulative weight of a series of judgments, each of which is debatable, which together reconfigure how the history and purpose of Hebrews should be understood.

Rothschild opens her argument by disputing the common view that, prior to Augustine and Jerome, Hebrews was "rejected" in the west. She argues that the absence of Hebrews from the Muratorian Fragment is an absence not a rejection. Furthermore, the exclusion of Hebrews from the list of Paul's letters by Gaius, as reported in Eusebius, in fact testifies more to the general assumption by persons in the west that Paul wrote Hebrews. Rothschild gives a careful accounting of the debates and citations of Hebrews in the earliest manuscripts and in church writings, in both the east and west. The evidence shows that, even when questions were raised about the Pauline character of Hebrews, those questions arose from the assumption of Pauline authorship. Therefore, Rothschild says it is misleading to ask whether Hebrews was either "rejected" or "accepted" as Pauline. Hebrews was routinely and persistently included in the Pauline corpus even when its uniqueness was noted.

Hebrews is not, Rothschild admits, a classic pseudepigraphon because it is formally "anonymous." This has led modern scholars to focus the debate about Pauline authorship on the postscript. Scholars who see the postscript as original to Hebrews tend to downplay its Pauline character, while scholars who see the postscript as a later addition tend to see it as an attempt to make Hebrews sound more Pauline. Rothschild argues that both groups are mistaken. The postscript is intentionally Pauline in its content and style, but it is not "an eleventh hour attempt" (62) by a later hand to make the letter seem Pauline. Rather the postscript is part of the original letter, all of which was intended to seem Pauline.

This leads Rothschild into a detailed analysis of the Pauline character of Hebrews. She opens her analysis by questioning the common assumption that Christians had access to unknown and now lost traditions that formed the theological foundations of Christian texts, including Hebrews. Rather than appealing to this "otherwise unknown corpus of stock traditions" (117), it is better to see Hebrews and other texts as intentionally imitating and echoing "their own cherished writings" (117). In fact, this imitation of Paul's style and imagery is a (but not the) primary way the author of Hebrews made the text seem to be from Paul. Rothschild makes her case by means of a meticulous tracing of Pauline echoes in Hebrews, beginning with the postscript and then moving chapter by chapter through

Hebrews. The literary method of the author of Hebrews is most clearly seen in the post-script, which imitates Paul's diction and simulates apostolic presence, making thereby "a pseudonymous claim" (78) of Pauline authorship without naming Paul. The rest of Hebrews creates a sense of Pauline authorship by employing the moral categories and terminology of Paul, by alluding to the same scriptures as does Paul, and by echoing Paul's letters in both terminology and style. Many of the connections that Rothschild perceives between Hebrews and the Pauline corpus will seem tenuous to many readers. There are, after all, reasons that modern scholars have not perceived Hebrews as Pauline in rhetoric or theology. Although Rothschild claims that both "the quantity and quality" of these correspondences demonstrate intentional pseudepigraphy (116), I suspect that many readers will be more impressed by the quantity than the quality of these perceived connections. In any case, the numbers of connections that Rothschild finds is impressive. Rothschild suggests that this deep literary connectedness to the Pauline corpus was one reason that Christians, for 1500 years, thought Paul had written Hebrews. Until recent times, the author's attempt to make Hebrews seem Pauline without naming Paul was successful.

Recognizing that modern scholarship has not perceived literary allusion as a primary means of creating a pseudepigraphon, Rothschild examines and questions the assumptions of modern scholarship on pseudepigraphy. While Rothschild concedes that most early Christian pseudepigrapha were written under a false name, she also argues, I think correctly, that the presence of a false name tells little about the purpose of the name or the circumstances of the writing of the text. Furthermore, many texts, particularly Jewish ones, falsify by including themselves in an authoritative text or collection. This means that the presence of Paul's name is not necessary for the creation of a Pauline pseudepigraphon. Rothschild further critiques the usual criteria for determining which texts are pseudepigraphical, arguing that apart from literary imitation each criterion assumes what it seeks to prove. This critique is probably true enough, although I am not certain how the perception of literary imitation avoids the same hermeneutical circularity.

Rothschild contends that, despite the many Pauline echoes in the text, the primary reason the text was perceived as Pauline is that it circulated from its inception as part of the Pauline corpus. In order to make this case, Rothschild examines again the early Christian assumption of Pauline authorship, including the placement of Hebrews in P<sup>46</sup> between Romans and 1 Corinthians. She acknowledges that there may have been early collections of Paul's letters that did not contain Hebrews. However, she insists that the textual evidence shows that it never circulated on its own. It was, therefore, always seen as Pauline because it was always part of the Pauline corpus. Plus, it sounded like Paul. She proposes that the original author of Hebrews published the letter by attaching it to the Pauline corpus in order to create the impression that the letter was by Paul. In all of this, I think Rothschild makes a strong case.

With this in place, Rothschild can give an account of the origin and purpose of Hebrews. Hebrews, she suggests, was written to Jewish readers as Paul's testament, "a tool for understanding the [Pauline] corpus, in particular, Romans" (153). In a manner reminiscent of Second Isaiah, the author of Hebrews borrows from Paul in order to create a new revelation. Paul's writings "functioned as pliant material from which to create new, openly derivative yet distinctive, inspired teaching" (133). Hebrews is an active rather than passive interpreta-

tion of Paul. "Thus, with Hebrews, (different from the other deutero-Pauline letters), Christianity has not yet fully retreated from an oracular- to an interpretation-based religion" (133). This is nicely framed. However, I do not understand the suggestion that Hebrews in this regard is different from the other deutero-Pauline letters. It seems to me that every single pseudepigraphon in the NT is just as creative and new and inspired as Hebrews.

Rothschild concludes her study with two delightful and almost playful series of readings of, first, the oracular texts in Hebrews, and, second, the explicit theological contradictions in Hebrews. Her reading of the prophetic texts in Hebrews employs David Aune's typology of prophetic speech. Aune's categories have been criticized for being too broad, whereby almost everything becomes a form of prophetic speech. And Rothschild's readings may suffer a bit from the same broadness of typology. Nevertheless, her readings are insightful and persuasive, and they effectively illustrate the theological and literary creativity of Hebrews. Finally, her account of Hebrews' famous contradictions builds upon the work of Alexander Wedderburn, who argues that Hebrews uses absurdity to make a point. Rothschild suggests that the point is to dehistoricize the theology of Paul. The author creates a "meta-historical" version of Paul's theology that cannot be disproved by an absence of historical fulfillment. For instance, Christians, as Ernst Käsemann noted, are in search of a city. They wander without rest. However, Rothschild further notes that these same Christians already "have come to Mount Zion" (12:22). Christians already have and do not yet have their city. This blatant contradiction undermines any simplistic historical interpretation of Christian promise. These readings are a nicely evocative way to end her study, although I do wonder if all these "contradictions" function in quite the same way.

Rothschild is a superb reader of texts, both ancient and modern. This makes her study a pleasure to read. She is unfailingly accurate in her renditions of other scholars. Her readings of ancient texts are perceptive and credible. Rothschild has beautifully articulated the flaws in many common assumptions about Hebrews; she has proposed plausible alternatives; and she has thereby reframed the academic discussion of Hebrews. I think her book represents a major contribution to our study of Hebrews.

Lewis Donelson  
Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary  
Austin, Texas