

AN ILLITERATE FISHERMAN AND IMPRESSIVE LETTER: A DIALOGUE
WITH BART D. EHRMAN

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Introduction

One of the critical objections raised against the Petrine authorship of 1 Peter¹ is the elegant Greek of the letter, which seems to be a mark of the extended literary training of its author.² Based on the data found in 1 Peter, P.J. Achtemeier concludes that the author must have ‘enjoyed some level of formal education.’³ J.H. Elliott also notes that the advanced Greek of 1 Peter ‘displays abundant affinities in vocabulary and style to classical writings, evidencing

1. In this paper, the word ‘authorship’ means *attribution of the letter*.

2. Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter* (ed. Eldon J. Epp; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), pp. 3-4, notes that 1 Peter was carefully composed by someone who studied writing: (1) the author of 1 Peter uses the accumulation of synonyms (1.8, 10; 2.25; 3.4); (2) he frequently employs comparison (1.7, 13; 2.2, 16, 25; 3.4-5; 5.8); (3) he utilizes a series of words with similar sounds (1.4, 19; 3.18) and rhythmic structures (1.3-12); (4) he uses anaphora either for parallel phrases (4.11) or to organize a passage (2.13-3.1); (5) he employs, in some places, antithetic (2.14; 3.18; 4.6) and synthetic (2.22-23; 4.11; 5.2-3) parallelisms; (6) he utilizes the ‘*εἰ* + optative’ construction (3.14, 17); and (7) he uses coordinate parallel expressions—in which the first is negative and the second is positive—to emphasize the same particular idea (1.14-15, 18-21, 23; 2.16; 5.2-3). This succinct analysis of the linguistic style of 1 Peter demonstrates the capability and level of literacy of its writer. Whoever wrote 1 Peter was a compositional grapholiterate.

3. Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, p. 4.

“rhetorical competence” and “literary refinement” of the author.”⁴ For this reason, many scholars agree that the Greek of 1 Peter rates among the three most highly literate works in the New Testament (along with Hebrews and Acts).⁵ This conclusion is problematic, however, because Paul’s education was decidedly better than that of Peter.⁶ The purported incongruence between ‘a lower-class illiterate fisherman’ and the elegant Greek demonstrated in 1 Peter has made the Pseudonymous Author Hypothesis the *communis opinio* among Petrine scholars.⁷

In response to the *communis opinio*, some scholars have promoted the Amanuensis Hypothesis: Peter utilized an amanuensis, whose Greek was of higher caliber than his own;⁸ therefore, the amanuensis was responsible for drafting the letter, and Peter was responsible for authenticating the letter. In sum, the Amanuensis Hypothesis scrutinizes one’s failure to distinguish between *one’s ability to write a letter* and *one’s participation in an epistolary*

4. John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB, 37B; New York: Doubleday, 2000), p. 64.

5. Karen H. Jobes, ‘The Syntax of 1 Peter: Just How Good is the Greek?’, *BBR* 13 (2003), pp. 159-73 (163).

6. Peter, admittedly, had less education than Paul, a former Pharisee and a student of Gamaliel. On Paul’s education, see Jörg Frey, ‘Das Judentum des Paulus’, in *Paulus: Leben—Umwelt—Werk—Briefe* (ed. Oda Wischmeyer; Uni-Taschenbücher, 2767; Tübingen: Francke, 2006), pp. 5-43; Stanley E. Porter, *When Paul Met Jesus: How an Idea Got Lost in History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 16-22; Wilhelm Wuellner, ‘Greek Rhetoric and Pauline Argumentation’, in William R. Schoedel and Robert L. Wilkin (eds.), *Early Christian Literature and the Classical Intellectual Tradition* (Festschrift Robert M. Grant; Théologie Historique, 53; Paris: Beauchesne, 1979), pp. 177-88.

7. Some of the commentaries that have held to the Pseudonymous Hypothesis of 1 Peter are as follows: Francis W. Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter: The Greek Text with Introduction and Notes* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1947), pp. 27-28; Heikki Koskenniemi, *Studien zur Idee und Phraseologie des griechischen Briefes bis 400 n. Chr.* (Helsinki: Akateeminen Kirjakauppa, 1956); Werner G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (trans. Howard C. Kee; Nashville: Abingdon, rev. edn, 1973), pp. 421-24; Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, pp. 4-5; Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), pp. 721-22; Reinhard Feldmeier, *The First Epistle of Peter: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (trans. Peter H. Davids; Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), pp. 32-39.

8. See the next section of this article (‘The Amanuensis Hypothesis’).

environment, raising doubts about the adequacy of utilizing the Greek of 1 Peter to underpin the claim that 1 Peter is a forgery.

In his recent discussions of ancient forgeries, however, Bart D. Ehrman once again raises the long-repeated question: ‘Was Peter, a lower-class fisherman from rural Galilee, among that minuscule fraction of the Palestinian population who could compose books in elegant Greek?’⁹ Ehrman then rejects the Amanuensis Hypothesis of 1 Peter on the basis of (1) exceptional practice, (2) inappropriate juxtaposition and (3) shift in authorship.¹⁰ He ultimately concludes, ‘The book of 1 Peter was not written by Peter, but by someone falsely claiming to be Peter. It is, in short, a forgery.’¹¹

While Ehrman is neither the first nor the only one to raise the question about the authorship of 1 Peter,¹² his recent arguments against the Petrine authorship of the epistle have not received adequate interaction. Hence, it is the aim of this article to evaluate Ehrman’s objections. To this end, I will first briefly revisit the Amanuensis Hypothesis in order to demonstrate how Peter’s contemporaries composed letters. This task will show (1) that although the practice of pseudonymous writing is well recognized and acknowledged in antiquity,¹³ the practice of amanuensis writing is also a legitimate means of composing a Greco-Roman letter and (2) that there are various means of utilizing an amanuensis in composing a letter. Next, based on the evidence gathered in the first section, I will interact with the three objections that Ehrman raises against the Amanuensis Hypothesis of 1 Peter. In the end, I will conclude that the arguments Ehrman raises against the Amanuensis Hypothesis of 1 Peter are unsustainable. To be sure, I aim neither to *prove* that Peter employed an amanuensis when composing 1 Peter nor to *claim* the authenticity of the letter’s authorship. Instead, I solely engage Ehrman’s re-

9. Bart D. Ehrman, *Forgery and Counterforgery: The Use of Literary Deceit in Early Christian Polemics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 245. Cf. *idem*, *Forged: Writing in the Name of God—Why the Bible’s Authors Are Not Who We Think They Are* (New York: HarperOne, 2011), pp. 133-39.

10. See Ehrman, *Forged*, pp. 133-39; *idem*, *Forgery*, pp. 218-22, 248-49.

11. Ehrman, *Forgery*, p. 247. In a similar vein, Adolf Jülicher, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (trans. J.P. Ward; London: Smith, Elder, 1904), p. 207, says, ‘We may assert without hesitation that if the first word, Peter, of our epistle were absent, no one would have imagined that it had been composed by him.’

12. See n. 6 above in this article.

13. Ehrman, *Forgery*.

cent objections against the Amanuensis Hypothesis of 1 Peter—showing them to be insufficient.

The Amanuensis Hypothesis

In this section, I will briefly revisit the Amanuensis Hypothesis, covering (1) the discovery of letters in Egypt, (2) the functions of an amanuensis, (3) the amanuensis as contributor, (4) the letter-editing process and (5) the authentication of the letter. This undertaking will demonstrate how Peter's contemporaries composed letters.

A Light from Egypt

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, thousands upon thousands of varied letters written on papyrus, from the general time of Peter, were uncovered in Egypt. This discovery revealed that letter-writing was a common form of communication among Greco-Romans. Fortuitously, the arid climate and sandy soil of the desert helped preserve the materials from decaying. Many of the letters that were discovered were previously not available, so scholars were eager to compare them to the epistles in the New Testament. By comparing the New Testament letters to these Hellenistic letters, Adolf Deissmann discovered that all the New Testament letters generally shared the same language, form, style, use of stereotypical expressions and features as the ordinary Hellenistic letters of Peter's day.¹⁴ Based on this information, Deissmann concludes that the New Testament letters were actual letters that can be categorized within the Hellenistic epistolary genre.¹⁵ Ever since Deiss-

14. See Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World* (trans. Lionel R.M. Strachan; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1910).

15. It is important to realize that Christian letters in antiquity were not markedly distinct from non-Christian letters in terms of their epistolary style because Christians followed the standard Greco-Roman epistolary conventions of their time. Thus, any given Christian letter, including 1 Peter, should not be treated differently. Hans Conzelmann and Andreas Lindemann, *Arbeitsbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Uni-Taschenbücher, 52; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 13th edn, 2000), p. 416, aptly note, '1 Petr erweist sich durch den brieflichen Rahmen (anders als in früheren Auflagen dieses Buches angenommen) als wirklicher Brief.' ('1 Peter proves itself to be a real letter through the letter framework [contrary to what was assumed in previous editions of

mann laid the groundwork for study in this area, many significant advances have been made in understanding the different types of ancient letters.¹⁶

One of the great insights gleaned from the discoveries in Egypt is that amanuenses were utilized at *all levels of society* around the time of Peter.¹⁷ A good number of people in the Greco-Roman world, therefore, could hire amanuenses.¹⁸ This discovery provides a plausible explanation as to how letter-writing, which was typically associated with the rich and well-educated, could have been carried out in Greco-Roman society by individuals with low

this book].’) Cf. Lincoln H. Blumell, *Lettered Christians: Christians, Letters, and Late Antique Oxyrhynchus* (NTTSD, 39; Leiden: Brill, 2012), p. 236; Steve Reece, *Paul’s Large Letters: Paul’s Autographic Subscription in the Light of Ancient Epistolary Conventions* (LNTS, 561; New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), p. 40.

16. Among recent treatments, some of the most significant are as follows: William G. Doty, *Letters in Primitive Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973); John L. White, *Light from Ancient Letters* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986); Stanley K. Stowers, *Letter-Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986); Abraham J. Malherbe, *Ancient Epistolary Theorists* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988); E. Randolph Richards, *The Secretary in the Letters of Paul* (WUNT, 2.42; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991); Michael B. Trapp (ed.), *Greek and Latin Letters: An Anthology with Translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Hans-Josef Klauck, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament: A Guide to Context and Exegesis* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006); Blumell, *Lettered Christians*; Roger S. Bagnall and Raffaella Cribiore, *Women’s Letters from Ancient Egypt: 300 BC–AD 800* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2015); Reece, *Paul’s Large Letters*; Antonia Sarri, *Material Aspects of Letter Writing in the Graeco-Roman World (500 BC–AD 300)* (Materiale Textkulturen, 12; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017).

17. Richards, *The Secretary*, pp. 15-23; *idem*, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing: Secretaries, Composition and Collection* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), pp. 60-64; Francis Xavier J. Exler, *The Form of the Ancient Greek Letter: A Study in Greek Epistolography* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1923), p. 126.

18. E. Randolph Richards, ‘Pauline Prescripts and Greco-Roman Epistolary Conventions’, in Stanley E. Porter and Andrew W. Pitts (eds.), *Christian Origins and Greco-Roman Culture: Social and Literary Contexts for the New Testament* (TENTS, 9; ECHC, 1; Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 497-514 (497 n. 2), notes ‘The widespread use of secretaries by all levels of society for all types of letter writing was also a major force in standardizing the format and content of letters.’

levels of literacy.¹⁹ Since the amanuensis service was a common epistolary practice during Peter's time, even an individual who possessed little literacy could author a letter in a secondary manner.²⁰

The Functions of an Amanuensis

According to E. Randolph Richards, the amanuensis in antiquity could function in three ways: transcriber, composer or contributor.²¹ An amanuensis

19. In his most influential work on literacy in the ancient world, William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 266-67, famously argues that literacy levels are estimated to be at approximately ten percent of the population in the Roman Empire. (For the estimates, see Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, pp. 327-32.) Although not all scholars have uncritically accepted Harris's percentage, the majority of subsequent scholarship has supported his view. Michael J. Kruger, *The Question of Canon: Challenging the Status Quo in the New Testament Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), p. 86, summarizes this point as follows: 'We shall not challenge Harris's argument regarding the low literacy rate among early Christians ... Even if the literacy rates were higher than Harris would allow, there is little doubt that the vast majority of the early Christian population was unable to read or write.'

However, one ought not to assume that ten percent of the Greco-Roman populace is a small number of people. Keith Hopkins, 'Conquest by Book', in John H. Humphrey (ed.), *Literacy in the Roman World* (JRASS, 3; Ann Arbor, MI: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 1991), pp. 346-62 (365), aptly points out that 'if adult male literacy was about 10 per cent across the Roman empire, then there were roughly 2 million adult males who could read and write to some extent in the empire as a whole.' Hence, theoretically speaking, two million literates could offer an amanuensis service for the residents in the Greco-Roman world wishing to send a letter.

20. Richards, *Letter Writing*, pp. 62-64; Stanley E. Porter, 'What Do We Know and How Do We Know It? Reconstructing Early Christianity from Its Manuscripts', in Stanley E. Porter and Andrew W. Pitts (eds.), *Christian Origins and Greco-Roman Culture: Social and Literary Contexts for the New Testament* (TENTS, 9; ECHC, 1; Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 41-70 (45). Although amanuenses operated in various spheres—making legal documents, treaties, and land grant texts and copying existing letters—this article will focus exclusively on the amanuensis service vis-à-vis letter-writing.

21. Richards, *Letter Writing*, pp. 64-80; *idem*, *The Secretary*, pp. 97-111. Notably, Greco-Roman literary evidence demonstrates that the extent to which different authors utilized an amanuensis was not the same; rather, it was a spectrum, running from a transcriber right up to a composer. Since the authors of letters could involve

functioning as a transcriber may have written the letter out in longhand at the dictation of the author, either *syllabatim* or *viva voce*, as his skill allowed.²² On the other hand, an amanuensis functioning as a composer would have been instructed by the author to compose a certain type of letter to someone for a specific purpose and would not have been given explicit directions as to how to develop the topic.²³ The former may have ensured that everything in the letter was written exactly as the author intended, while the latter would have assumed complete control over every aspect of the letter on behalf of the author. It is important to note, however, that these two cases were rare in antiquity,²⁴ and, thus, we should avoid relying on any of these extreme examples. Most amanuenses in antiquity, as Richards emphasizes, were utilized as contributors, falling somewhere on the spectrum between the two extremes mentioned above.²⁵

The Amanuensis as Contributor

Ancient epistolary convention demonstrates that an amanuensis who functioned as a contributor was allowed to improve the author's language and

themselves in the letter-writing process to varying degrees, it is almost impossible to draw clear-cut boundaries. Nevertheless, scholars generally agree that the three categories that Richards provides are workable. Some of these include Torrey Seland, *Strangers in the Light: Philonic Perspectives on Christian Identity in 1 Peter* (BibInt, 76; Leiden: Brill, 2005), p. 12; Klauck, *Ancient Letters*, pp. 59-60; David B. Capes, Rodney Reeves and E. Randolph Richards, *Rediscovering Paul: An Introduction to His World, Letters and Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), pp. 69-71; Michael O. Wise, *Language and Literacy in Roman Judaea: A Study of the Bar Kokhba Documents* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), pp. 220-32; Reece, *Paul's Large Letters*, pp. 204-206; Jermo Van Nes, *Pauline Language and the Pastoral Epistles: A Study of Linguistic Variation in the Corpus Paulinum* (LBS, 16; Leiden: Brill, 2018), pp. 94-95.

22. E.g. Cicero, *Att.* 5.12.3; 13.25.3; *Fam.* 11.32.3; Pliny, *Ep.* 9.36.2; P.Oxy. 4.724; 6.932.

23. E.g. Cicero, *Att.*, 3.15.8; 11.2.4; 11.3.3; 11.5.3; 11.8.1.

24. E. Randolph Richards, 'Reading, Writing, and Manuscripts', in Joel B. Green and Lee M. McDonald (eds.), *The World of the New Testament: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), pp. 345-66 (359).

25. See Richards, *Letter Writing*, p. 64.

voice when editing the original draft.²⁶ Since the author would hire an amanuensis to assist in the letter-writing process, the amanuensis often improved the letter so as to better match acceptable epistolary form. In doing so, the amanuensis utilized vocabulary, syntax, style and even handwriting when fleshing out drafts, which the author provided orally, textually, or both.

If the author was literate, he would choose to provide an amanuensis with a written rough draft of a letter.²⁷ The amanuensis would then make a rough copy on a wax tablet and edit it to conform to epistolary standards.²⁸ Consequently, the final draft of the letter would inevitably exhibit much more eloquent language and voice than that of the original author. For example, Cicero, in his numerous letters, admits that his amanuensis, Tiro, provided many editorial improvements to his letters.²⁹ Such a confession demonstrates that an amanuensis could indeed enhance an author's letters.³⁰

26. Richards, *The Secretary*, pp. 43-47; *idem*, *Letter Writing*, pp. 74-77.

27. For cases wherein literates utilized an amanuensis, see Cicero, *Att.* 4.16.1; 5.17.1; 8.13.1; *Fam.* 11.32.2; 16.3.2; 16.4.3; 16.11.1; 16.17.1. Interestingly, a wealth of evidence demonstrates that even literates in the Greco-Roman world employed amanuenses for various purposes. One of the obvious reasons was to avoid the arduous task of writing and its menial preparation. For example, the preparation for writing a letter required a substantial commitment of technical labor: (1) purchasing papyrus, (2) cutting a piece of papyrus, (3) gathering reeds, (4) making ink, (5) incising a wax tablet and more. Furthermore, the letter-writing activity itself was a tedious and laborious task. Since amanuenses were much more familiar with these epistolary conventions than the majority of authors, literate authors sought out amanuenses to whom they could delegate the duties of letter-writing. On the laboriousness of letter-writing, see E. Randolph Richards, 'Will the Real Author Please Stand Up? The Author in Greco-Roman Letter Writing', in Paul Copan and William L. Craig (eds.), *Come Let Us Reason: New Essays in Christian Apologetics* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2012), pp. 113-36 (125); Reece, *Paul's Large Letters*, pp. 12-16.

28. For further evidence of the use of epistolary tools, see Richards, *The Secretary*, pp. 55-57; Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 49-52; Klauck, *Ancient Letters*, pp. 44-60; Richards, *Letter Writing*, pp. 47-58; Hella Eckardt, *Writing and Power in the Roman World: Literacies and Material Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 21-40.

29. E.g. Cicero, *Fam.* 16.3.2; 16.4.3; 16.10.2; 16.11.1; 16.17.1.

30. Although the Ciceronian corpus is not exactly analogous to the New Testament letters, it still 'contain reflections on the nature of letters more generally and of

If the author was illiterate or semi-illiterate,³¹ he would provide a rough draft to an amanuensis orally, conveying the general idea of the message he wished to deliver.³² The amanuensis would then take the content, catchwords or gist of the topic in as much detail as possible in order to flesh out a complete, properly-styled letter.³³ In such an instance, it was theoretically possible that even an illiterate author could send a letter that contained remarkably refined prose.

This observation suggests that the finalized version of a letter could have been noticeably different from the first draft provided by the author. The amanuensis, who contributed to the actual wording of the author's letter, most likely would have diluted the author's idiosyncratic language presented in the first draft.³⁴ Consequently, the linguistic quality which the final draft of a letter demonstrates should not be seen as an exact reflection of the author's actual linguistic ability but that of the amanuensis's.

The Letter-Editing Process

Once the letter was written, the amanuensis would need to present the draft to the actual author to ensure that the epistle accurately represented what the author intended.³⁵ If the author was not satisfied with the presented draft, he would occasionally request that the amanuensis make certain changes to the text. This editorial work was possible due to the existence of wax tablets and

Cicero's own epistles more specifically.' Thorsten Fögen, 'Ancient Approaches to Letter-Writing', in Paola Ceccarelli et al. (eds.), *Letters and Communities: Studies in the Socio-Political Dimensions of Ancient Epistolography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 43-80 (56).

31. There were likely two types of illiteracy in antiquity: (1) those who were not able to read or write (i.e. 'illiterate') and (2) those who were able to read but not capable of writing (i.e. 'semi-illiterate').

32. Richards, *Letter Writing*, p. 65.

33. See H.C. Youtie, 'Βραδέως γράφω: Between Literacy and Illiteracy', *GRBS* 12 (1971), pp. 239-61; *idem*, 'ΥΠΟΓΑΦΕΥΣ: The Social Impact of Illiteracy in Graeco-Roman Egypt', *ZPE* 17 (1975), pp. 201-21 (209); *idem*, 'Because They Do Not Know Letters', *ZPE* 19 (1975), pp. 101-108.

34. Cf. Richards, *Letter Writing*, p. 155.

35. Richards, *The Secretary*, pp. 63-64; *idem*, *Letter Writing*, pp. 81-84; Wise, *Language and Literacy*, pp. 223-24. Whether dictated or otherwise, the amanuensis had to read the letter back or show it to the author before dispatching it. See also Capes, Reeves and Richards, *Rediscovering Paul*, pp. 68, 70, 79.

styli, which were designed for the amanuensis to easily write on and erase.³⁶ After clearing the writing on a reusable wax tablet with the back of a stylus, the amanuensis would rework and update the draft in the process of writing.³⁷ The process of editing and revising would continue until the author was completely satisfied.³⁸

It should be emphasized that this letter-checking and authenticating process was an extremely vital part in letter-writing convention because once a letter was sent, the author always took full responsibility of its contents.³⁹ Since the author could not blame an amanuensis for poor wording, grammar, nuance, form or even errors, it would be unwise to assume that the author gave his amanuensis such freedom that he could change, alter, supersede or overthrow the contents of his letter.⁴⁰

The Authentication of the Letter

Once the author checked the final draft and was finally satisfied with it, he would move to the next epistolary step: authentication of the letter. Since writing in someone else's name was not unheard of in Peter's day,⁴¹ ancient writers were quite concerned about protecting the authenticity of their letters. Thus, the real author was aware of the need to persuade his readers that the

36. See n. 25 above in this article.

37. Cf. Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 153; Richards, *Letter Writing*, pp. 47-48, 55-57.

38. Richards, *Letter Writing*, p. 82, notes that the author could further correct a final draft that was ready for dispatch.

39. Richards, *Letter Writing*, pp. 82-84. See Cicero, *Quint. fratr.* 1.2.8; 2.16.3; 3.9.8; *Fam.* 3.9.1.

40. Lincoln H. Blumell, 'Scribes and Ancient Letters: Implications for the Pauline Epistles', in Kent P. Jackson and Frank F. Judd, Jr (eds.), *How the New Testament Came to Be: The Thirty-Fifth Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2006), pp. 208-26 (223-24), well encapsulates this point and, thus, is worth quoting at length: 'Even when scribes were given much control over the writing of a given letter, it was not the scribe that was considered the real author but rather the sender named in the letter. This was because it was that person's responsibility to read over the final draft. If there were any errors or inaccuracies, the sender was to catch them in the final reading and make sure that they were corrected because he bore ultimate responsibility for the letter's content.'

41. See Ehrman, *Forgery*, pp. 11-148.

letter actually came from the letter-commissioner himself.⁴² One of the most effective ways to authenticate authorship was to append a short autographic subscription (e.g. a word of farewell, a health wish, a short note, a postscript) at the end of the letter in the author's own handwriting.⁴³ In this case, the author's final handwritten portion, which would appear noticeably different from that of the amanuensis,⁴⁴ would serve as a personal signature,⁴⁵ indicating that the author of the letter 'had seen or heard the letter and consequently assumed responsibility for its contents.'⁴⁶

42. On various means of authenticating letters, see Richards, *Letter Writing*, p. 171; Sarri, *Material Aspects*, pp. 142-46.

43. Richards, *Letter Writing*, pp. 171-75; Reece, *Paul's Large Letters*, pp. 23-24, 42-43; Capes, Reeves and Richards, *Rediscovering Paul*, pp. 68-69; Sarri, *Material Aspects*, pp. 121, 146. For examples of papyri that show the main body of each letter written in one hand, presumably that of the amanuensis, and a final note written in a second hand, presumably that of the author, see P.Oxy. 1.113; 2.245, 394; 3.479, 530; 12.1491; 18.2192; 41.2985; P.Fay. 110; P.Mich. 8.490, 496. While being completely incapable of composing a letter themselves, illiterate and semi-literate individuals might have been able to write a simple postscript in their own hands by merely copying out the postscript that their amanuenses already had written for them on a wax tablet at the author's request. In such an instance, any individual who was not in the habit of writing could authenticate his letter.

44. Based on a representative selection of some over fifty-five Latin letters from Vindolanda which contain at least part of a subscription, Reece, *Paul's Large Letters*, p. 130, calculates that around eighty percent of the letters were written in two conspicuously different handwritings. Although the statistics Reece provided are not based on a comprehensive collection of papyri, his calculation likely represents a common Latin epistolary phenomenon in antiquity. As for the Greek letters, Reece, *Paul's Large Letters*, p. 138, calculates that seventeen percent of 2,500 letters that include subscriptions were written in the second hand. For an extensive treatment of the issue, see *Paul's Large Letters*, pp. 136-97.

45. Klauck, *Ancient Letters*, pp. 57-58, 293; Sarri, *Material Aspects*, pp. 106, 146. In Cicero, *Fam.* 10.21.1, after receiving handwritten letters from Lepidus and Laterensis, Plancus wrote Cicero, *credidi chirographis eius*, expressing confidence in the handwritten letters.

46. Richards, *Letter Writing*, p. 171. For a more thorough treatment on the various functions of autographic subscription in ancient letters, see Reece, *Paul's Large Letters*, pp. 9-10, 51-69.

Summary and Final Thoughts

In this section, I have revisited the Amanuensis Hypothesis, demonstrating (1) that it is a legitimate means of composing a Greco-Roman letter and (2) that people from every strata of society could hire amanuenses as contributors despite their social status, level of education or financial situation. For our purposes, the most important takeaway is that the amanuensis service distinguished *one's ability to write a letter* from *one's participation in an epistolary environment*. For this reason, even an illiterate author could send a letter that contained remarkably refined prose. In this scenario, the amanuensis could have contributed enough to explain the sophisticated Greek in the letter. Finally, the author's idiosyncratic handwritten addition appended to the letter would serve as a personal signature. Drawing upon the evidence discussed in this section, then, I will next interact with Ehrman's objections against the Amanuensis Hypothesis of 1 Peter.

A Defense of the Amanuensis Hypothesis of 1 Peter against Its Objections

The three objections that Ehrman raises against the Amanuensis Hypothesis of 1 Peter concern (1) exceptional practice, (2) inappropriate juxtaposition and (3) shift in authorship. I will tackle each of these issues in turn.

Exceptional Practice

In his recent discussions of ancient forgeries, Ehrman strongly rejects the Amanuensis Hypothesis of 1 Peter because he believes that the use of an amanuensis as a composer was a rare practice, reserved for the 'fabulously wealthy, highly educated, upper-class elites with very highly trained secretaries', and that there is 'no evidence at all for the kinds of letters being dictated by ... an illiterate Aramaic-speaking peasant such as Peter.'⁴⁷ Ehrman is correct in saying that the utilization of an amanuensis as a composer was restricted to the wealthy.⁴⁸ However, he entirely overlooks another possibility: people from every strata of society in the Greco-Roman could hire amanuenses as contributors despite their social status, level of education or financial situation. Three historical evidences seem to support this line of reasoning.

47. Ehrman, *Forgery*, pp. 218, 219.

48. Sarri, *Material Aspects*, p. 127.

First, evidence clearly demonstrates that amanuenses were not limited to the social upper-class alone. Although *many* well-written Greek letters were authored by the social elite, not *all* were authored by them. There were many well-written Greek letters from the lower-class (e.g. soldiers, weavers, farmers and salt dealers⁴⁹), indicating that both elite and non-elite authors were beneficiaries of the services of amanuenses.⁵⁰ Recall that even Paul, a tent-maker, utilized an amanuensis, even though he was not among the social elite.⁵¹ Thus, Peter, too, though not a social elite, may have used an amanuensis.

Secondly, there are numerous instances wherein amanuenses assisted the uneducated in composing letters.⁵² The existence of the illiteracy formula (i.e. a brief note at the end of a letter that explains that an amanuensis had written the letter for the illiterate letter-commissioner) supports this view.⁵³ Thus, whether Peter was illiterate or semi-literate, his inability to perform the actual labor of putting reed to papyrus with his own hand would not have prevented him from being the author of 1 Peter. In addition, the Greco-Roman world was in many ways an oral society.⁵⁴ Ancient letter-writing was much more a

49. For examples of papyri, see P.Mich. 5.244, 245; 8.490, 491; P.Oxy. 2.264; 4.725.

50. Cf. Philip F. Venticinque, *Honor Among Thieves: Craftsmen, Merchants, and Associations in Roman and Late Roman Egypt* (New Texts from Ancient Cultures; Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2016), pp. 11, 41, 80-81, 152.

51. It is beyond dispute that the apostle Paul, just as virtually all other ancient writers, used an amanuensis to produce letters (cf. Rom. 16.22; 1 Cor. 16.21; Gal. 6.11; Col. 4.18; 2 Thess. 3.17; Phlm. 19). On Paul's use of an amanuensis, see Richards, *Letter Writing*, pp. 81-93; Greg Stanton, 'Accommodation for Paul's Entourage', *NovT* 60 (2018), pp. 227-46 (231-32).

52. E.g. P.Oxy. 2.264; 7.1466, 1491; 10.1273; 34.1709, 2713; P.Lips. 1.27; BGU 92; P.Ryl. 2.73; SB 3.6223.

53. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, pp. 166-67; Exler, *The Form of the Ancient Greek Letter*, pp. 124-27; Rita Calderini, 'Gli ἀγράμματοι nell'Egitto greco-romano', *Aeg* 30 (1950), pp. 14-41; Youtie, 'Because They Do not Know Letters'; *idem*, 'Βραδέως γράφων', pp. 239-61; Jeffrey A.D. Weima, *Neglected Endings: The Significance of the Pauline Letter Closings* (JSNTSup, 101; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), pp. 50, 55; Klauck, *Ancient Letters*, pp. 56-57. For the papyri examples, see P.Oxy. 2.264, 275; P.Ryl. 2.94; P.Hamb. 4.

54. Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and the Politics of Roman Palestine* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2014), p. 19; Carol Bakhos, 'Orality and

matter of speaking than writing. Hence, Peter might have chosen to provide an oral rough draft to an amanuensis,⁵⁵ and then his amanuensis would have improved the rough draft.

Thirdly, extant evidence from antiquity shows that those who were not wealthy could hire amanuenses. These individuals could use inexpensive amanuenses who possessed lesser skills and tools.⁵⁶ Such evidence demonstrates that an amanuensis could be a professional scribe trained in contemporary epistolary conventions or an average secretary able to produce a letter in legible penmanship and acceptable form. Although Peter's financial situation cannot be measured in any sense, he would not have had to find an extremely expensive amanuensis in order to author 1 Peter.⁵⁷ Granted, many scholars

Writing', in Catherine Hezser (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Daily Life in Roman Palestine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 482-99 (488-99).

55. Ehrman, *Forgery*, p. 249, argues, 'In the case of 1 Peter, Peter himself could not have dictated this letter in Greek to a secretary any more than he could have written it in Greek.' However, the following work has challenged this view: Sanghwan Lee, 'Reexamining the Greek-Speaking Ability of Peter in Light of a Sociolinguistic Perspective', *JGRChJ* 14 (2018), pp. 158-81.

56. *Edictum Diocletiani de Pretiis Rerum Venalium*, 7.39-41, a Latin payment schedule drafted in the third century, reads, 'scriptori in sc<ri>ptura optima versus, n(umero) centum, D(enarii) XXV; sequ[enti]s scripturae versus, n(umer)o centum, D(enarii) XX; tabellationi in scriptura libelli vel tabularum [in ver]sibus, n(umer)o centum, D(enarii) X.' Abbreviations in the Latin text have been reproduced in the transcription. Another good example is P.Lond.inv. 2110, which details two distinct payments to amanuenses ('viz. 28 dr. for 10,000 *stichoi* and 13 dr. for 6,300 *stichoi* [i.e. 20.6 dr. for 10,000 *stichoi*']) but without mention of quality. Theodore C. Skeat, 'A Codicological Analysis of the Chester Beatty Papyrus Codex of Gospels and Acts (P 45)', in James K. Elliott (ed.), *The Collected Biblical Writings of T.C. Skeat* (NovTSup, 113; Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 27-43. These examples indicate that the price for hiring an amanuensis in ancient times varied. This variable rate may also hold true for Peter's day.

57. Based on a thorough examination of early Christians papyri from the second to fourth centuries CE, Alan Mugridge, *Copying Early Christian Texts: A Study of Scribal Practice* (WUNT, 362; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), convincingly demonstrates that many early Christian papyri bear the marks of skilled amanuenses. This discovery may suggest that many Christians in antiquity were able to utilize amanuenses who possessed legible penmanship just as much as others in the Greco-Roman world. This potentiality may also hold true in the case of Peter.

believe that the Greek of 1 Peter is among the three most highly literate works in the New Testament. However, Karen H. Jobs successfully demonstrates that the Greek of 1 Peter is not as sophisticated as the works of Josephus, who is known to have had a relatively high level of Greek education.⁵⁸ This observation indicates that the quality of Greek in 1 Peter has been exaggerated. Although the quality of 1 Peter outshines the majority of letters within the New Testament, it is not superior to Greco-Roman literature outside the New Testament.⁵⁹ Another possibility is that Peter could have utilized a Greek-speaking Christian brother, such as Mark⁶⁰ or Silvanus,⁶¹ as an anonymous amanuensis for 1 Peter. Peter may have also relied on the hospitality of the Christian community, or he could have asked a fellow Christian who owned a literate slave to help him with the Greek of 1 Peter.

Inappropriate Juxtaposition

Ehrman also rejects the Amanuensis Hypothesis of 1 Peter because the letter is not like typical Greco-Roman letters as regards length and complexity. He argues that 1 Peter is relatively longer and more complex than common

58. Jobs, 'The Syntax of 1 Peter', pp. 159-73.

59. Using Richards's framework for approximating the cost of writing New Testament letters in his *Letter Writing*, pp. 165-70, I estimate that today it would cost about \$600 US dollars to utilize an amanuensis to prepare a dispatched and retained copy of 1 Peter. See also *idem*, 'Reading, Writing, and Manuscripts', pp. 360-61.

60. E.g. Jongyoon Moon, *Mark as Contributive Amanuensis of 1 Peter?* (Münster: LIT, 2009).

61. There is one minor issue that deserves brief consideration. E. Randolph Richards, 'Silvanus Was Not Peter's Secretary: Theological Bias in Interpreting *διὰ Σιλουανοῦ ... ἔγραψα*', *JETS* 43 (2000), pp. 417-32 argues that the mention of Silvanus in 1 Pet. 5.12 indicates that Silvanus was the letter-carrier rather than the amanuensis. However, it should be emphasized that the Amanuensis Hypothesis of 1 Peter does not depend upon Silvanus himself being the amanuensis. Since it was a common phenomenon in the Greco-Roman world for the amanuensis to remain anonymous, Peter could have followed this custom, withholding the identity of his amanuensis. Nevertheless, Richards's research does not preclude the possibility that Silvanus was the letter-carrier *and* the amanuensis. For a helpful discussion of this issue, see Daniel B. Wallace, 'Medieval Manuscripts and Modern Evangelicals: Lessons from the Past, Guidance for the Future', *JETS* 60 (2017), pp. 5-34 (15 n. 54); Seland, *Strangers in the Light*, pp. 22-28; Reece, *Paul's Large Letters*, p. 41.

Greco-Roman letters.⁶² Statistically speaking, the average length of most ancient letters was ‘fewer than 100 words, and very few surpass 200.’⁶³ To put this point into perspective, 1 Peter contains 1,684 words,⁶⁴ a total which is undoubtedly much greater in length than many letters at the time. In addition, 1 Peter is much more complicated than most ancient letters. Thus, Ehrman is correct in arguing that the length and complexity of 1 Peter are not analogous with the common Greco-Roman letter.

However, Ehrman fails to recognize that 1 Peter is relatively shorter and less complex than some of the ‘undisputed’ letters of Paul.⁶⁵ For example, Romans—the head member of the so-called Tübingen Four (*Hauptbriefe*)—is much longer and theologically more complex than 1 Peter. Yet, reputable scholarship, including Ehrman himself,⁶⁶ has never disputed the authenticity of Romans, even though Paul employed an amanuensis, Tertius, to write the letter. Therefore, letter length and complexity should not be determinative for the authenticity of a letter in Peter’s day.

Shift in Authorship

Ehrman believes that the use of an amanuensis in composing a letter inevitably causes a shift in authorship.⁶⁷ However, the existence of ancient epistolary data reveals a problem with Ehrman’s argument. The data clearly shows that the involvement of an amanuensis did not simply usurp authorship from the commissioner of the letter because the author customarily checked and authenticated the final draft before dispatching the completed letter.⁶⁸

62. See Ehrman, *Forgery*, pp. 219-20.

63. Reece, *Paul’s Large Letters*, p. 13. Richards, *Letter Writing*, p. 163, notes, ‘In the approximately 14,000 private letters from Greco-Roman antiquity, the average length was about 87 words, ranging in length from 18 to 209 words.’

64. This calculation was offered by Klauck, *Ancient Letters*, p. 348.

65. The list of ‘undisputed’ Pauline epistles is as follows: Romans, 1–2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, Philemon.

66. Ehrman, *Forgery*, pp. 31 n. 6, 218, 248-49, 280.

67. Ehrman, *Forgery*, p. 248; *idem*, *Forged*, p. 139; cf. Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter*, p. 28; Eric Eve, ‘1 Peter’, in John Barton and John Muddiman (eds.), *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 1263-70 (1263).

68. Armin D. Baum, ‘Content and Form: Authorship Attribution and Pseudonymity in Ancient Speeches, Letters, Lectures, and Translations—A Rejoinder to Bart

Stated otherwise, the amanuensis was responsible for drafting the letter, whereas the author was responsible for authenticating the letter.

As several scholars aptly point out, Josephus's writings provide us with an especially illuminating example.⁶⁹ Reputable scholarship has never disputed that *Jewish War* (c. 75–79 CE) and *Jewish Antiquities* (c. 93–94 CE) were written by one and the same author, Josephus.⁷⁰ However, in his edition of Josephus for the Loeb Classical Library, Henry St John Thackeray points out remarkable differences in Greek between the two works of Josephus: *Jewish War* displays eloquent Greek, whereas *Jewish Antiquities* demonstrates rougher Greek.⁷¹ How can we account for this linguistic discrepancy, especially when *Jewish Antiquities*, which was written about twenty years after *Jewish War*, demonstrates poorer Greek than *Jewish War*? In *Apion* 1.50, Josephus mentions that he utilized certain *συνεργοί*⁷² to help him with the Greek of *Je-*

Ehrman', *JBL* 136 (2017), pp. 381-403. Baum also notes, '[T]he distinction between authentic and inauthentic texts was made on the basis not of wording but of content' (p. 400).

69. Baum, 'Content and Form', pp. 387-88; Richards, 'Will the Real Author Please Stand Up?', p. 131.

70. On the date of each work, see Steve Mason, 'Josephus's Judean War', in Honora H. Chapman and Zuleika Rodgers (eds.), *A Companion to Josephus* (Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016), pp. 13-35 (15); Daniel R. Schwartz, 'Many Sources but a Single Author: *Josephus's Jewish Antiquities*', in Honora H. Chapman and Zuleika Rodgers (eds.), *A Companion to Josephus* (Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016), pp. 36-58 (36).

71. Henry St John Thackeray, 'Introduction', in Josephus, *The Jewish War, Books I-III* (trans. Henry St John Thackeray; LCL; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927), pp. vii-xxxi (xv).

72. Based on Josephus's own statements regarding his lack of knowledge of Greek (i.e. *Ant.* 1.7; 20.263), it is plausible that *συνεργοί* refers to those who provided Josephus with editorial assistance in composing *Jewish War*. Cf. Morton Smith, 'The Troublemakers', in W. Horbury, W. D. Davies and J. Sturdy (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Judaism*. III. *The Early Roman Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 501-68 (501-502); John R. Levison and J. Ross Wagner, 'The Character and Context of Josephus' *Contra Apionem*', in Louis H. Feldman and John R. Levison (eds.), *Josephus' Contra Apionem: Studies in its Character and Context with a Latin Concordance to the Portion Missing in Greek* (AGJU, 34; Leiden: Brill, 1996), pp. 1-48 (2).

wish War.⁷³ Thackeray suggests that the elegant Greek demonstrated in *Jewish War* was the result of helpers who provided editorial assistance to Josephus.⁷⁴ Concurring with Thackeray, Heinz Schreckenberg provides an interesting theory that Josephus ‘seine Sprachkenntnisse allmählich so vervollkommnete, daß er die auf das *Bellum Iudaicum* folgenden Werke ohne nennenswerte Hilfe griechisch niederschreiben konnte’ (‘gradually perfected his language skills so that he was able to write the works following the *Bellum Iudaicum* in Greek without any significant help worth mentioning’).⁷⁵ If so, this theory provides a plausible explanation as to why *Jewish Antiquities*, which Josephus presumably wrote without significant aid from the συνεργοί, displays rougher Greek than *Jewish War*.

73. *Apion* 1.50 reads, εἶτα σχολῆς ἐν τῇ Ῥώμῃ λαβόμενος, πάσης μοι τῆς πραγματείας ἐν παρασκευῇ γεγενημένης χρησάμενός τισι πρὸς τὴν Ἑλληνίδα φωνὴν συνεργοῖς οὕτως ἐποίησάμην τῶν πράξεων τὴν παράδοσιν (‘Then, when I had leisure in Rome, and when all of my materials were prepared, I composed my account of the events, having made use of some helpers for the Greek language’). Tessa Rajak, *Josephus: The Historian and his Society* (London: Duckworth, 2nd edn, 2002), pp. 47-48, argues that the protestation of linguistic inadequacy appearing in *Apion* 1.50 should be understood as literary etiquette, which was not uncommon in antiquity and demonstrated the author’s humility. However, I concur with Erkki Koskeniemi, *Greek Writers and Philosophers in Philo and Josephus: A Study of Their Secular Education and Educational Ideals* (SPhA, 9; Leiden: Brill, 2019), p. 287, who correctly points out, ‘Josephus seldom shows traces of humility, and on the contrary he used to boast openly about his skills.’ Thus, I take Josephus’s words in *Apion* 1.50 as an indication of real protestation of his Greek inadequacy. On what Josephus thought of his own Greek, see Koskeniemi, *Greek Writers*, pp. 277-89.

74. Thackeray, ‘Introduction’, p. xv, notes, ‘The immense debt which [Josephus] owes to these admirable collaborators is apparent on almost every page of the work.’ See also *idem*, *Josephus: The Man and the Historian* (New York: Jewish Institute of Religion, 1929), pp. 18, 105-106; John R. Bartlett, *Jews in the Hellenistic world: Josephus, Aristaeus, the Sibylline Oracles, Eupolemus* (Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World, 1.1; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 92; Koskeniemi, *Greek Writers*, pp. 286-87.

75. Heinz Schreckenberg, ‘Text, Überlieferung und Textkritik von Contra Apionem’, in Louis H. Feldman and John R. Levison (eds.), *Josephus’ Contra Apionem: Studies in its Character and Context with a Latin Concordance to the Portion Missing in Greek* (AGJU, 34; Leiden: Brill, 1996), pp. 49-82 (52).

It is important to note that Josephus did not attribute the *authorship* of *Jewish War* to the *συνεργοί* in spite of their influence on the wording of his work. Rather, Josephus credited them for their *improvements to his Greek*. This fact means that although the finalized version of *Jewish War* could have been noticeably different from his first draft,⁷⁶ the *συνεργοί* do not share authorship with Josephus.⁷⁷ It is Josephus who claimed sole credit for the work.⁷⁸ Richards correctly states, ‘In this broader role, the form, syntax, vocabulary and style as well as specific pieces of context were contributed by the secretary ... while the general context and perhaps argumentation remained the author’s.’⁷⁹ This observation suggests that no matter how extensively an amanuensis was used, the actual author retained authorship. For this reason, Cicero, Josephus, Pliny, Seneca, Paul and other ancient writers who clearly utilized an amanuensis for their works claimed credit for the finished product.⁸⁰ If this was the practice of numerous ancient letter writers, is it not possible for Peter to have done the same for his letter? Peter’s amanuensis, then, could have contributed enough to explain the sophisticated Greek in the epistle, while Peter himself retained authorship. Thus, I concur with Armin D. Baum, who remarks, ‘[Ehrman’s] assertion that in antiquity a text’s authenticity was ... always on the basis of its wording goes one step beyond what the numerous relevant ancient sources reveal.’⁸¹

It is also important to recall that the actual author could use various means of authenticating the letter to retain authorship—for example, writing a sim-

76. Cf. Seth Schwartz, ‘The Composition and Publication of Josephus’s *Bellum Iudaicum* Book 7’, *HTR* 79 (1986), pp. 373-86; Koskenniemi, *Greek Writers*, pp. 285-86.

77. Richards, ‘Reading, Writing, and Manuscripts’, pp. 359-60; Baum, ‘Content and Form’, p. 388.

78. *War* 1.3. William S. Campbell, *The ‘We’ Passages in the Acts of the Apostles: The Narrator as Narrative Character* (SBLStBL, 14; Atlanta: SBL, 2007), p. 39, notes, ‘[T]he narrative explicitly identifies the narrator and the author by introducing Josephus as author/narrator.’

79. Richards, *Letter Writing*, p. 65.

80. Capes, Reeves and Richards, *Rediscovering Paul*, p. 72 n. 21, remark, ‘Classical scholars have long noted significant stylistic variations between, for example, some of Cicero’s letters; yet they do not look to pseudonymity for the solution. They ascribe it to secretarial mediation.’

81. Baum, ‘Content and Form’, p. 381.

ple postscript in the author's idiosyncratic handwriting. It is generally agreed that 1 Pet. 5.12-14 is the epistolary postscript.⁸² In light of Greco-Roman epistolary conventions, it is an entirely plausible scenario that Peter, who may have employed an amanuensis up to this point, took over the duties of the amanuensis and appended this section in his own handwriting to authenticate the content of the letter. Even if Peter was completely illiterate, he could have orally conveyed the gist of the epistolary postscript to his amanuensis, who then wrote it in the appropriate form and style on a wax tablet for Peter to copy out. Once his amanuensis composed the draft, Peter would copy out what was written on the wax tablet and append it at the end of the *Ausgangstext*. Since the postscript of 1 Peter contains only forty-five words, it would not be impossible for Peter to copy it out. Based on several papyrus examples gleaned from Peter's day, it is also possible that Peter only copied out the six-word farewell greeting (Εἰρήνη ὑμῖν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ) and appended it to his letter to legitimize its contents. Since the length of the autographic subscription in Greco-Roman letters ranges from a single word to several lines, the six-word farewell greeting written in Peter's idiosyncratic handwriting would have been sufficient to authenticate his letter. Importantly, such a task was doable for even entirely illiterate people.

P.Oxy. 12.1491 seems to shed some light on this line of reasoning. Interestingly, the letter repeats a four-word farewell greeting, once in handwriting that matches the rest of the document and once in different handwriting, presumably that of the author (1st hand: ἐρρῶσθαί σε εὐχομαι ἄδελφε; 2nd hand: ἐρρῶσθαί σε εὐχομαι ἄδελφε). How could one account for this repetition? The repeated farewell greeting probably indicates that the author, who was illiterate, copied the first greeting, written by an amanuensis at the author's request, and appended it at the end of the letter as means of authenticating its content. The repeated farewell greeting, which was written in the author's distinctive handwriting, would serve as the author's personal signature, indicating that his letter was not a forgery. Since the farewell greeting consists of only a few words, it would not be impossible for the illiterate author to copy it out. It is not clear, however, why the first farewell greeting—presumably that of the amanuensis—appears in the letter. Although we can only specu-

82. For the elements of an epistolary postscript in the passage, see Richards, 'Silvanus Was Not Peter's Secretary.'

late, it is almost certain that the purpose of the second farewell greeting was to authenticate the letter via the author's idiosyncratic handwriting.⁸³

If true, then the six-word farewell greeting (Εἰρήνη ὑμῖν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ) written in Peter's handwriting at the end of the *Ausgangstext* would have served as a seal of authenticity for the whole letter, confirming that Peter had seen the letter and assumed full responsibility for its contents.⁸⁴ Granted, there is no evidence in 1 Peter as to whether Peter utilized the services of an amanuensis. Furthermore, unlike Rom. 16.22, where the amanuensis whom Paul employs explicitly reveals his identity,⁸⁵ 1 Peter does not even mention the presence of an amanuensis. However, the surviving epistolary evidence confirms that it was common practice in the Greco-Roman world for an amanuensis to remain anonymous.⁸⁶ Unless the amanuensis added his name in

83. Cf. Richards, *Letter Writing*, p. 171; Reece, *Paul's Large Letters*, p. 198.

84. Since the differences in handwriting would disappear in subsequent copies, this procedure worked only for the original letter. However, the recipients still had another method they could employ to validate the authenticity of the letter—they could check the author's custom, style, tone, content and argument. For example, Cicero once received a copy of a letter purported to be from Caesar. Yet, he did not believe that Caesar actually authored the letter because it was out of character. Thus, Cicero, *Att.* 11.16.1, comments, *non meo vitio fit hoc quidem tempore (ante enim est peccatum) ut me ista epistula nihil consoletur. nam et exigue scripta est et suspiciones magnas habet non esse ab illo; quas animadvertisse te existimo.* On the various means of verifying authorship claims, see Richards, 'Will the Real Author Please Stand Up?', pp. 132-35.

85. Romans 16.22 reads ἀσπάζομαι ὑμᾶς ἐγὼ Τέρτιος ὁ γράψας τὴν ἐπιστολὴν ἐν κυρίῳ.

86. Reece, *Paul's Large Letters*, pp. 24, 45. Since letters in antiquity rarely mentioned the involvement of the amanuensis (e.g. *P.Oxy.* 16.1860; 42.3057; 49.3505; *P.Mert.* 2.82; *P.Berl.Möller* 11; *P.Mich.* 8.482), it is almost impossible to trace the identity of the amanuensis. In *P.Fouad* 1.37 (a first-century contract in the form of a letter, dated 48 CE), the body of the contract was written in a markedly different hand from that of the author's agreement of the contract. While the handwriting of the body, presumably that of an amanuensis, is fairly regular and professional, the handwriting of the agreement, presumably that of the author, was written in a clumsier, irregular and amateurish hand. Although there is no mention of the amanuensis's activity in the contract, it is plausible to see the presence of the two different handwritings as an indicator of the involvement of an amanuensis. For other examples where two different handwritings appear, see *P.Fouad* 1.40, 47; *P.Brem.* 5,

the letter for specific reasons, he would have remained anonymous. Therefore, the absence of a named amanuensis in 1 Peter does not necessarily mean that the amanuensis was uninvolved in the letter-writing process. In fact, Rom. 16.22 is the only Pauline instance in which the author's amanuensis explicitly reveals his identity, likely shedding some light on the present issue: the phenomenon of a named amanuensis was atypical.⁸⁷ With high likelihood, Peter took this practice for granted and did not identify his amanuensis. In sum, there is nothing unusual about Peter's amanuensis leaving no trace of his identity.

The reconstructed scenario above thus explains the purported incongruence between Peter's low level of literacy and the elegant Greek of 1 Peter: Peter utilized an amanuensis, whose Greek was of higher caliber than his own. If so, then not only could the finalized version of 1 Peter have been noticeably different from the first draft provided by Peter, but also Peter's amanuensis could have contributed enough to the letter-writing process to explain the sophisticated Greek in the epistle. In this scenario, the amanuensis was responsible for drafting the letter, and Peter was responsible for authenticating the letter.

Summary and Final Thoughts

In this section, drawing upon the evidence discussed in the first section, I interacted with Ehrman's three objections against the Amanuensis Hypothesis of 1 Peter: (1) exceptional practice, (2) inappropriate juxtaposition, and (3) shift in authorship. I concluded that none of these objections is significant enough to necessitate the Pseudonymous Author Hypothesis of 1 Peter. Hence, the Amanuensis Hypothesis should not be regarded as 'wishful thinking' adopted by some scholars who desperately desire to rescue Petrine authorship from its detractors.⁸⁸ Of course, it is impossible to know whether Peter used an amanuensis—and if he did, to what extent—in his letter-writing process. Furthermore, even if the author of 1 Peter used an amanuensis, it is also impossible to know that it was truly Peter and not a pseudonymous Peter. However, that Peter lived in a context where people wishing to send a letter nor-

13, 14, 15, 61; P.Mich. 3.174, 207; 8.472; P.Oxy. 2.253; 3.602; 31.2559; 38.2860, 2873; P.Oslo 3.151; P.Petaus 29; P.Col. 3.211, 216; P.Lond. 3.897; P.Lond.inv. 2553; P.Giss. 1.75, 97; T.Vindol. 2.248, 255, 256, 291; *BGU* 2.632.

87. Reece, *Paul's Large Letters*, p. 41.

88. Ehrman, *Forgery*, p. 222.

mally utilized an amanuensis service must be taken into serious consideration when investigating the authorship of 1 Peter. Hence, we must be open to the possibility that Peter would have been familiar with this letter-writing procedure and thus followed it.

Surprisingly enough, Ehrman does not allow a room for this suggestion because in his view, there is ‘no evidence whatsoever’ to support the claim that Peter utilized an amanuensis in composing 1 Peter.⁸⁹ Such reasoning, I believe, is problematic in that Ehrman fails to distinguish between *absolute certainty* and *reasonable certainty*. Thus, he raises the bar of evidence to extreme heights that cannot possibly be reached for any document. Instead of holding such radical skepticism, we need to carefully interact with the historical data from the cognitive environment that best explains the evidence, relying on *probability* rather than *absolute certainty*.

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to interact with three specific objections raised by Bart D. Ehrman against the Amanuensis Hypothesis of 1 Peter: (1) exceptional practice, (2) inappropriate juxtaposition and (3) shift in authorship. In order to accomplish this task, I first provided a clearer picture of how Peter’s contemporaries composed letters in light of Greco-Roman epistolary conventions. The evidence gleaned demonstrates that *one’s ability to write a letter* and *one’s participation in an epistolary environment* were not two sides of the same Greco-Roman coin. Due to the existence of an effective epistolary convention (viz., the amanuensis service), this distinction was possible. For this reason, even an individual who possessed the least literary ability could be an author of a letter in a secondary manner. Next, drawing upon the evidence discussed in the first section, I addressed Ehrman’s three objections against the Amanuensis Hypothesis of 1 Peter, concluding that none of these objections is significant enough to necessitate the Pseudonymous Author Hypothesis of 1 Peter. Ehrman’s lack of careful attention given to Greco-Roman epistolary conventions has resulted in unnecessary conclusions over the authorship of 1 Peter.

To reiterate, this article aimed neither to *prove* that Peter employed an amanuensis when composing 1 Peter nor to *claim* the authenticity of the

89. Ehrman, *Forgery*, p. 248.

letter's authorship—only to rebut Ehrman's claim that the Amanuensis Hypothesis of 1 Peter is 'wishful thinking' built upon false assumptions. As I have attempted to show in this article, the arguments Ehrman raises against the Amanuensis Hypothesis of 1 Peter are not sustainable in light of Greco-Roman epistolary convention.